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ABSTRACT

This book presents bibliographic annotations of 202 picture books and 53 activities for teaching writing. The first part of the book is arranged alphabetically by author within categories of six traits of writing in the analytical assessment model: ideas and content (clarity and focus, rich and vivid details, and a clear sense of purpose), organization (enticing lead, strong transitions with easy-to-follow sequencing, and a powerhouse conclusion), voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Picture books annotated in the bibliography were published between 1976 and 1997. The second part of the book is a collection of teaching activities and lessons organized by trait as well. Contains three general references and two web pages as a start to "surf the net" for other resources. (RS)

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PICTURE BOOKS

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY WITH ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS

By Ruth Culham

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY

VICKI BRANDEL AND TEACHERS

FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY

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PICTURE BOOKS

An Annotated Bibliography
With Activities for Teaching Writing

Ruth Culham

with contributions from Vicki Spandel

and teachers across the country

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

101 SW Main Street, Suite 500

Portland, Oregon 97204

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Dedication

So many good hearts have contributed to the fifth edition of ***Picture Books****.*

Thank you to **Sharon Northern**, who patiently made change after change, page after page, and smiled through it all; to **Mel Riggs** who was there on the very first day, but stayed anyway; to **Ralph Fletcher**, who inspires, teaches, and helps us cherish the written word just that much more; and to the students and staff of **El Toyon** and **New Horizons** schools in National City, California, and their extraordinary principal, **Rick Hanks**, because they honor each other and celebrate the power of reading and writing every day.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Background 2
Annotated Bibliography 4
- Ideas 5
- Organization 27
- Voice 45
- Word Choice 63
- Sentence Fluency 75
- Conventions 85

Teaching Lessons and Activities 86
- Ideas 87
- Organization 101
- Voice 117
- Word Choice 131
- Sentence Fluency 151
- Conventions 157

General References 161
Author Index 165
Title Index 171

Introduction

If this is your first connection with our picture book bibliography, welcome. If you ordered this fifth edition to get the latest, greatest 1998 copy, then you will see that we have been busy bookaholics again this year. We are delighted by the quality, the eloquence, and the craftsmanship exemplified in the picture books we've collected in 1997. It is with great pleasure that we recommend these titles to you. There should be something in here to fit everyone—no matter what grade level, subject area, or interest.

This year's edition adds many new books published in 1996 and 1997, and suggests a link to one of the traits in the six-trait model of writing. Don't limit yourself and your creativity by seeing the book as useful to teach only one quality/trait of writing, however. Once you read and work with many of the titles in this collection, you will recognize their links to many if not ALL the traits of writing. Use the books to inspire yourself and your student writers in whatever way best suits you and your curriculum. And, thanks to your generous and kind response to the lessons that were included in last year's edition, that section of this book has been significantly expanded to include more than 50 new lessons written by teachers at all grade levels K-14.

The first part of the collection is arranged *alphabetically by author within categories* of the six traits of writing in the analytical assessment model: ideas & content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. The second part of the book is a collection of teaching activities and lessons organized by trait as well.

This volume is growing; more than 100 new titles this year alone, so we've added an author and title index at the end. Use them to find favorite authors, familiar titles, and the new classroom lessons for all ages. Another new feature: a link to the Internet. In the reference section we've included several web sites where you can find even more information about picture books.

We're pretty excited about the new books, creative lessons, expanded references, and this whole new edition in general. Let's get started with a short review of the six traits of writing . . .

A little bit of background on the six traits of writing assessment . . .

The traits referred to in *Picture Books* come from the combined wisdom of thousands and thousands of teachers and more than 15 years of careful research and analysis of student work. We call them simply "The Six Traits of Writing" because time and time again, these same characteristics show up on teachers', parents', students,' and community members' lists of what makes effective writing. They are:

IDEAS—the heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, together with the details that enrich and develop that theme.

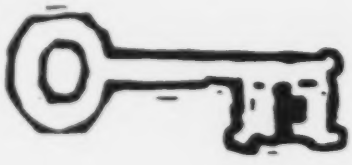
ORGANIZATION—the internal structure of the piece, the thread of central meaning, the logical and sometimes intriguing pattern of ideas.

VOICE—the heart and soul, the magic, the wit, along with the feeling and conviction of the individual writer coming out through the words.

WORD CHOICE—the use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader.

SENTENCE FLUENCY—the rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way in which the writing plays to the ear, not just to the eye.

CONVENTIONS—the mechanical correctness of the piece: spelling, grammar and usage, paragraphing, capitals, and punctuation.



These traits are the foundation of a shared language that enables teachers and students to talk and work together as writers. It is possible to consider the effect of all six traits on a piece of writing, or you can look at one trait at a time. And, the exciting part is that these criteria, this shared vocabulary, can be explained and taught to students of all ages so they become their own best partner in the revising and editing process. When students really understand what makes writing—any kind of writing—work effectively, that's when they really take ownership of the writing process. They learn from the criteria and internalize them so that the language of the traits becomes a powerful revision tool. This approach to assessment is highly flexible and a natural entry into thoughtful decision-making relating to quality instruction.

Picture Books is only one resource available to help teachers link writing assessment and instruction. We hope you'll find it interesting, useful, and motivating. For more information about training opportunities and additional support materials using Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's six-trait writing assessment program, please contact us at 1-800-547-6339.

Annotated Bibliography

The following pages contain an alphabetized collection of annotated picture book titles organized by trait. But by no means should you assume that there is only one possibility for using these books as resources in your classroom. In fact, each book has limitless possibilities!

For example, here's an idea suggested by several school districts that have successfully used previous editions of the picture book bibliography as a resource for teaching writing. Media specialists or district language arts specialists purchase a dozen or more books from each of the recommended lists for each trait. They package each of these smaller collections in boxes or containers as kits, label them by trait, and have these kits available on loan to classroom teachers in their schools or across districts.

Here are some other ideas . . .

- Use the kits as they are, then ask teachers to include the names of books they'd like to see added before they borrow it again. This way, the kits grow to reflect titles and topics important to local issues and curriculum.
- Select enough titles from Picture Books (from your local library/media center and classroom) so that each child has three or four to read. Ask students to read their books and have them stack each one in piles labeled Ideas, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Conventions. Compare their choices with those in the bibliography.
- Develop a lesson to go with one or more of the books from the bibliography. Put a copy of that lesson in the kit of books on that trait when you return it. Who knows? Maybe when you check out the set of books next year, there will be lots of new lessons tucked in for you to copy. (Just think of the possibilities . . .)

One more thing before you turn the page and begin to enjoy the list of wonderful picture books just waiting for you . . . this list is NOT complete. These book titles are only the ones we have been fortunate enough to find. You probably have many more titles at your fingertips that will work just as well for teaching the six traits of writing—old favorites and new. Please consider this as a starter kit of titles and ideas and take it from here!

Books that illustrate strong

Ideas and Content

Clarity and focus
Rich and vivid details
A clear sense of purpose

Allard, Harry and James Marshall. ***Miss Nelson is Back.***
Houghton Mifflin, 1976. Paperback: ISBN 0-395-41668-X.
Do your students experiment by adding elements of suspense to their stories? See if they can imitate the style of this charming story in their own work. Students could also try their hand at turning Miss Nelson into other delightful characters and learn a little more about character development. What if they had the opportunity to rewrite this story using one of their current teachers?

Angelou, Maya. ***Kofi and His Magic.*** **Clarkson Potter, 1996.**
Hardcover: ISBN 0- 517-70453-6.
Maya Angelou . . . you have to know that this is a book of beauty and wonder. A young West African boy, Kofi, from a town known for its beautifully woven Kente cloth, tells a magical story of imagination which allows us all to journey to neighboring towns, meet different people, and experience life all over his country. Using the warp and the weft of his town's cloth to deftly weave the story together, this piece is bound to teach and delight. (Featured in the *Seeing with New Eyes* video.)

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Bash, Barbara. ***Tree of Life: The World of the African Baobob.*** **Sierra Club Books (Little, Brown), 1989. Paperback: ISBN 0-316-08322-4.**

In graceful calligraphic text rich with detail, Bash tells the fascinating life cycle story of the African tree of life. Magnificent watercolor illustrations complement the text, showing the baobob as a nesting site for the yellow-collared lovebird and other colorful, bright-feathered inhabitants; a home for tiny sweat bees and numerous other insects; a twilight shelter for the timid and elf-like bush babies; a shady hideout for impalas; and a hearty meal for bark-loving elephants. Discover, through text that informs and entertains at the same time, a dozen other roles this tree plays in the fabric of African life. An excellent illustration of how to select just the right details and how to recount them in a way that involves and enlightens readers.

Baylor, Byrd. ***Everybody Needs a Rock.*** **Macmillan, 1985. Paperback: ISBN 0-689-71051-8.**

Think rocks all look pretty much alike? Byrd Baylor's lyrical book teaches readers to look for that special rock that is theirs alone, and to notice and appreciate its specialness. Read this one, then have students search for and write about their own rocks.

Baylor, Byrd. ***I'm in Charge of Celebrations.*** **Scribners, 1986. Hardcover: ISBN 0-684-18579-2.**

How often do students complain, "Nothing ever happens to me! I have nothing interesting to write about!" In this magical book, everyday happenings are transformed into moments of personal celebration. The heroine of this enchanting story loses herself in the wonder of a summer meteor shower, ventures closer than ever before to a timid coyote, revels in wildflowers, dances with the dust devils, and discovers that clouds can come in surprising colors—all cause for personal celebration. A story that will help your students discover the celebrational moments in their lives, too.

Baylor, Byrd. ***The Other Way to Listen.*** **Scribners, 1978. Hardcover: ISBN 0-684-16017-X.**

"When you know 'the other way to listen,' you can hear wildflower seeds burst open, you can hear the rocks murmuring, and the hills singing, and it seems like the most natural thing in the world. Of course it takes a lot of practice, and you can't be in a hurry." I love this book; I love all of Byrd Baylor's books. They soothe me; they help me take deeper, more thoughtful, breaths; they help me to reflect on the important things in life. In this piece, the very act of listening is transformed to reflect the essence of the natural world. As with all her works, nature is the central character and we are invited along for the ride.

Burdett, Lois. ***A Child's Portrait of Shakespeare.*** **Black Moss Press, 1995. ISBN 0-88753-263-2.**

How do you make the world of Shakespeare accessible to readers as young as seven? Lois Burdett will show you in this amazing work. At the heart is a rhyming couplet version of Shakespeare's life and times. In response, Burdett's young students have drawn portraits of the Bard, his parents, his children, his city, and the Globe Theater. They have totally immersed themselves in Shakespeare's language and world vision by writing diary and journal entries, taking on the roles of Shakespeare and the major players in his life, drafting "in character" letters to one another, reflecting on 1600s history (the evils of the Black Plague), and generally, transporting themselves right into the spirit of the times. Through their full-color art and their insightful (often wildly humorous) writing, we are privileged to witness their profound understanding of Shakespeare's work and of why it still touches our hearts and minds today. As one student (Christian) put it, "If Shakespeare were alive today, I would invite him to sleep over in my tree fort and we would talk a lot about his plays."

Burdett, Lois. *Macbeth for Kids.* Firefly Books, 1996.
ISBN 0-88753-279-9.

> Macbeth what is the matter with you? It is your imaginashon!
> Do you want the banquet to be totally rooined? Relax! Behave
> yourself. You are embarasing me. You call yourself a man?
> More like a cowerdly snake! Now pull yourself together!
> -Lady Macbeth (Matt Hunt, Age 7)

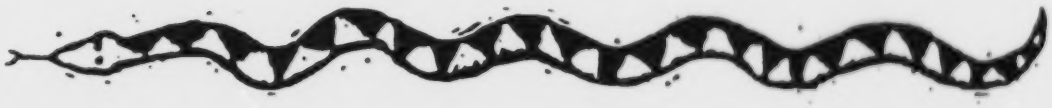
In letters like this one, in pictures, diaries, and reflective writings, we are taken inside second grade students' responses to and interpretations of *Macbeth*, a work which clearly holds them spellbound. As in her other books, Lois Burdett retells the play in rhyming couplets, helping students follow the plot, understand the characters' motivations, and bring their own meanings to the text. Sixty-four wonderful pages of Burdett's charming poetry complemented by her students' writing and delightful illustrations will make you wish you could rush out now to the nearest production of *Macbeth*—and take one of Burdett's students along to help you make sense of it all: "I think SHAKESPEARE wrote the Scottish play to tell the people that bad doesn't pay and that what goes around comes around," (Matt, age 7).

Burdett, Lois. *Twelfth Night for Kids.* Black Moss Press, 1995.
ISBN 0-88753-233-0.

Will Sir Toby Belch and Maria resolve their differences? Will the beautiful Olivia and Sebastian find true love? Or will Duke Orsino win Olivia's heart? Will the many mistaken identities sort themselves out or lead to chaos, turmoil and heartbreak? It's a comedy of secret notes, disguises, plots and plans, Shakespeare style, and Lois Burdett's imaginative second-grade writers and illustrators are well up for the task of helping us all visualize and enjoy the tale. Was Shakespeare always this much fun, or is it Burdett's rhyming couplets and her students' engaging, inspired responses that make the magic happen? A little of each, perhaps. Let the wisdom of second graders help you see Shakespeare with renewed insight. As Jeff tells us, "I know why he called it *Twelfth Night*. He had to write it at twelve o'clock at night cause none of his kids were around to bug him."

Cannon, Ann. *I Know What You Do When I Go To School.* Gibb Smith, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-87905-743-2.

Here's a clever piece of prose! What really happens back at home when kids go to school? Are there soap bubbles and fabulous parties? Are there amazing dinosaur discoveries? Do sheets and towels turn into incredible and fantastic forts? Join in as Howie invents many fanciful stories about what happens at home while he is away at school. He uses his vivid imagination in an attempt to convince his mother to let him stay home and have fun with her and his little brother. This book would be a great prompt for imaginative writing and student re-creation of the central idea! (Hey—I wonder what my cats are up to at my house right now . . .)



Cannon, Janell. *Verdi.* Harcourt Brace, 1997. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-201028-9.

The author of the much loved *Stellaluna* has hit the bull's eye again! In this exquisitely illustrated book (also drawn by Cannon) Verdi learns the very painful lessons of growing up, fitting in, and finding a place for himself. This is a very compassionate piece, filled with gentle humor and insight. As an added bonus, there are several pages at the end of the story with factual information about snakes. Students who read this book will easily understand how research and story writing connect.

Cherry, Lynne. *The Armadillo from Amarillo.* **Gulliver Green (Harcourt Brace), 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-200359-2.**

Have you ever asked yourself, "Where in the world am I?" Sasparillo, the armadillo in this story, both written and illustrated by the amazingly talented Lynne Cherry, asks that question over and over as he seeks to find his place in the big, wide world. He begins in the wide open expanse of Texas and page by page, detail by detail, he comes to understand that what he knows, his "place," is part of a much bigger world. Each picture and the text which accompanies it in this finely written and illustrated piece underscores the theme of self-discovery. The story is about the journey to understand more about how the individual can relate to the bigness of what is out there—a challenge to explore and learn as much as we can during the course of our lives. Lynne Cherry herself says it best at the end in her thoughtfully written Author's Note: *"The story is meant to inspire you to be interested in discovering where in the world you are. Sasparillo learns that the world he knows in the tangled woods is just one of many. You can learn about where you are by reading books, looking at maps, . . . and someday setting off to see the world."* P.S. Don't miss *The Great Kapok Tree*, and *A River Ran Wild* for other books drawing upon Lynne Cherry's passion for appreciating and understanding the importance of finding a balance which supports man's life on earth without destroying the environment.

Cherry, Lynne. *The Dragon and the Unicorn.* **Gulliver Green Books (Harcourt Brace), 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-224193-0.**

I love this book. Perhaps it is the use of an original fairy tale to tell such an important story; perhaps it is the appeal of the characters—the dragon Valerio, the unicorn Allegra, or the King's daughter Arianna; perhaps it is the gentle but powerful theme of protecting the environment and respecting all the living creatures on earth. I'm not sure. All I know is this piece works. It is a wake-up call that not only reminds us to honor the history of the earth and the sensitive balance needed for it to survive, but it also teaches us respect. The characters, though magical and steeped in mythology, seem very real. I wanted to read more about them long after the story was finished. The text is very eloquent in its simplicity. At the beginning, the sentences are simple and straightforward. As the story becomes more complex, so does the very structure of the language as it moves the reader carefully through the piece to its ultimate conclusion. The ending parallels the beginning by a return to the simpler rhythm and flow of ideas: "The Ardet Forest remains a haven for all living things. For people, it is a place to find peace and silence. But for animals, and for the dragon and the unicorn, it is home." Well said, Lynne. Well said. Wouldn't it be a great idea to read this book to your students and let them find their own issues about the environment which could be researched and told through stories like those of Lynne Cherry?

Cherry, Lynne. *Flute's Journey: The Life of a Wood Thrush.* **Gulliver Green Books (Harcourt Brace), 1997.**
Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-292853-7.

Another terrific piece by Lynne Cherry. This time she chooses to tell the story of the wood thrush and its struggle for survival. In this incredibly well-researched story, the reader gets an indepth understanding of the perils facing the wood thrush and what needs to happen in order to protect this species. As an added bonus, Lynne tells the story behind the story of *Flute's Journey* at the end. Kids and adults will be moved and feel the "call to action" after reading this book from Lynne's powerful environmental series.

Clary, Margie Willis. ***A Sweet, Sweet Basket.*** **Sandlapper, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-87844-127.**

A gift from the wonderful teachers and staff in Richland District Two, South Carolina, this book is a model for students as they learn to weave factual information into a piece of prose that is accurate, interesting, and thoughtful. If you don't know the history of the sweet grass baskets found in the Marketplace in Charleston, you'll enjoy this story of the great heritage that is represented in the artful craft of basket weaving. If you are familiar with sweet grass baskets, walking through the pages of their history will give you a renewed appreciation for the traditions that they represent.

Cole, Joanna. ***The Magic Schoolbus: At the Waterworks.*** **Scholastic, 1986. Paperback: ISBN 0-590-40360-5.**

Meet Ms. Frizzle, "the strangest teacher in the school." But boy, oh, boy, does she know how to throw a field trip. The world is her classroom; no place is too difficult to seek out. And when she takes her class on a tour of the city waterworks, she does *not* tell them to stay clean and dry—and *she* provides the *SCUBA* gear. You just have to love a teacher like that. This book is one of a series, all packed with facts, adventure, humor, voice, and some of the greatest illustrations ever. An excellent example of how much little details matter. (Another favorite: *The Magic School Bus—Lost in the Solar System.*)

Coles, Robert. ***The Story of Ruby Bridges.*** **Scholastic, 1995. Paperback: ISBN 0-590-43968-5.**

A gift from my wonderful friend Debbie Stewart of Topeka, Kansas, this nonfiction piece chronicles the story of Ruby Bridges, the first black child to attend an all-white elementary school. It's a familiar story to some, but it deserves a place in all our classrooms not only as a nicely written piece, but as a slice of American history that is important for every child to study and reflect upon. The lessons of forgiveness, appreciation, and understanding are applicable every single day in all of our schools and classrooms.

Cooney, Barbara. *Miss Rumphius.* Puffin Books, 1982.
Paperback: ISBN 0-14-050539-3.

"Alice Rumphius wanted to travel the world when she grew up, and then to live by the sea—just as her grandfather had done. But there is one more thing, he tells her: She must do something to make the world more beautiful. Young Alice does not yet know what that will be . . ." In this charming Victorian story, readers are invited to explore all the ways a person could make the world more beautiful. A great story starter idea for writers of all ages. (American Book Award winner.)

Dragonwagon, Crescent. *Home Place.* Aladdin Books, 1993.
Paperback: ISBN 0-689-71758-X.

This beautifully written and illustrated story is about a deserted house in the woods that is rediscovered by a family out for a hike. The young girl fantasizes about who might have lived there, and when she does so she recreates a whole family and their history to go with the now-deserted home. The text is lyrical and weaves two cultures together through their love and appreciation of the daffodils, the family suppers, and the honeysuckle-vined chimney. A nice choice to share for imagining, revisioning, re-seeing in another time and culture.

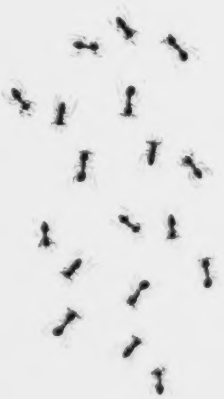
Everett, Gwen. *Li'l Sis and Uncle Willie.* Rizzoli, 1991.
Hardcover: ISBN 0-8478-1462-9.

Based on the life and paintings of William H. Johnson, this true story examines the impact of art, paintings, and family relationships as a young girl discovers how big the world can be. It is an inspirational book which celebrates cultural differences and validates the idea that important stories come from trying to make sense of our own personal experiences.

Fox, Mem. ***Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge.***
Kane/Miller, 1985. Paperback: ISBN 0-916291-26-X.
Young writers often have a hard time thinking of ways to bring personal meaning to everyday objects or experiences. As teachers, we yearn for the moments of insight that separate personal experiences from the story or paper with only the obvious retelling. In *Wilfrid Gordon . . .* (named after her father), Mem Fox shows how everyday objects can trigger very personal and special remembrances for an older woman who has lost her memory.

Frasier, Debra. ***On the Day You Were Born.*** **Harcourt Brace, 1991.**
Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-257995-8.
"On the day you were born the round planet Earth turned toward your morning sky, whirling past darkness, spinning the night into light." In this beautiful and reverent text, author Debra Frasier combines warmly personal voice with a global sense of time and space. Frasier's poetic prose engagingly celebrates the coming of new life all the while gently probing the mysteries of Earth's rotation, the force of gravity, the warmth and energy-giving force of the sun, animal migration, the pull of the tides, falling rain, the growth of trees, the rush of wind, and the evolution of human diversity. The initial text glorifies the specialness of birth; a wondrously informative prose appendix expands and illuminates themes just touched on in the earlier poetic tribute. A matchless example of how to pack a lot of information into a few eloquent words. (Winner of the Parents' Choice Award.)

Hepworth, Catherine. ***Antics!*** **Putnam and Grosset, 1992.**
Paperback: ISBN 0-698-11350-0.
This hilarious ABC book is a great example of how students can take any topic, gather significant information about it, and then turn it into a cleverly formatted ABC book. You might want to consider using this book under the trait of word choice, also, because the vocabulary sparkles. I bet you'd never dream how fascinating the world of ants really is!



James, Simon. *Dear Mr. Blueberry.* Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1991. Hardcover: ISBN 0-689-50529-9.

Looking for a way to share information in a new format? In *Dear Mr. Blueberry,* Emily writes to her science teacher about the blue whale she thinks is in her pond at home, asking for advice on what to feed it and how to take care of it. Her teacher writes back, gently explaining that the animal in her pond couldn't possibly be a whale and why. In the letters that follow, Emily is more and more adamant about the existence of the blue whale, while the science teacher tries harder and harder to teach her why that could not possibly be so. This format for sharing information inspires imagination and creativity, and could apply to any subject, any grade.

Johnson, Stephen T. *Alphabet City.* Viking Press, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-670-85631-2.

This book is an illustrated tour of the lines, shapes, and forms found in our world. But more than that, it features all the letters of the alphabet—all you have to do to see them is to look at things through the eyes of an artist. Begin your adventure with the foreword by illustrator Stephen Johnson who says, "I hope that my paintings will inspire children and adults to look at their surroundings in a fresh and playful way." I don't think I'll ever look at a confluence of buildings again without trying to see if a letter is formed where they meet the skyline.

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Johnston, Tony. ***Day of the Dead.*** **Harcourt Brace, 1997. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-222863-2.**

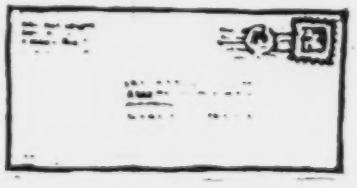
As students learn to acknowledge and celebrate their own cultural traditions, this little book might serve as a good example of explaining one such Mexican celebration, the annual El dia de Los Muertos, the Day of the Dead. This book opens as a small town in Mexico begins preparations for the celebration and moves through events of the day, and into the night as the townspeople walk the graveyards to welcome the spirits of loved ones home again. As a writing/personal research assignment or research paper idea, students might enjoy exploring their own cultural celebrations and comparing one to the other for similarities and differences. (A nice companion piece would be *My House Has Stars* by Megan McDonald, under the trait of Voice.)

Kramer, Stephen P. ***Lightning.*** **Carolrhoda Books, 1991. Hardcover: ISBN 0-87614-659-0.**

Fact-based expository writing doesn't have to be sluggish and boring. Steve Kramer's book is jam-packed with details and information, yet holds your attention like a well-crafted story. And oh, those photographs! Wow!!

Langen, Annette and Constanza Droop. ***Letters From Felix.*** **Abeville Press, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 1-55859-886-3.**

A little stuffed rabbit is inadvertently left behind as the family packs and heads home after vacation. What happens next are the cleverly told adventures of the rabbit as it tries to find its way home. The book utilizes lots of forms of organization and formatting by including postcards, letters, and notes that open and can be read as Felix the bunny travels the world. Pretty great idea . . . reminiscent of the *Jolly Postman* series. Students of all ages can recreate travel adventures to places they are studying in social studies. Or, perhaps they can plan a world tour of their own and write letters and postcards to make their own book by combining writing and geography. Can you think of other possibilities?



Lesser, Carolyn. *Great Crystal Bear.* Harcourt Brace, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-200667-2.

What do you know about polar bears? They're big. They're white. They hibernate in the winter. They live in the Arctic. (Is that the North Pole or the South Pole?) What else? If you are like most people, adults or children, that's about it. And there is more, so much more that we will find fascinating about these magnificent creatures in *Great Crystal Bear.* For instance, did you know these arctic bears have black skin? Do you know the Inuit legend about Nanuk—how a man entered an igloo and emerged as a bear, dressed in fur? Do you know what they eat? Or how they survive the great storms? How is it that they leave only one set of prints—front and back in the same place as they trek across the tundra? So many interesting things to learn about the great bear—and all woven tightly and artfully into this short expository picture book. The text creates the opportunity for us to appreciate survival, beauty, wisdom. It allows us to wonder . . .

Lewis, Paul Owen. *Grasper.* Beyond Words, 1993. Hardcover: ISBN 0-941831-85-X.

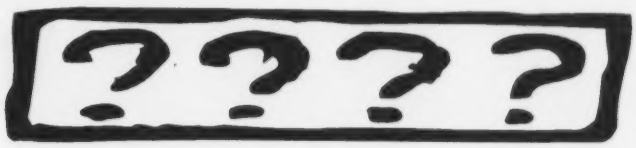
A unique treatment of leadership and individuality, many students will immediately relate to this tale of Grasper, a small and unenlightened crab who lives in a cramped and overcrowded tide pool. Like Grasper, most of us discover the world is bigger and better than we ever dared imagine as young children; but we also find that it can be dangerous, too. This delightfully told metaphor for the process of growing up is one which should become an instant favorite for perceptive readers of all ages.

Lobel, Arnold. *Fables.* Harper and Row, 1980. Hardcover: ISBN 0-06-023973-5.

Good stories always make a point. Lobel blends wry humor and beguiling simplicity to hold the eye and ear of even the youngest listener while bringing a smile to adult faces, too. It's no small trick and no one does it better. Twenty short but punchy tales run a short page apiece—fine for reading aloud when time is limited. A classic. (Caldecott Award winner.)

Macaulay, David. *Motel of the Mysteries.* Houghton Mifflin, 1979.
Paperback: ISBN 0-395-28425-2.

It is the year 4022; all of the ancient country of Usa has been buried under many feet of third and fourth class junk mail during a catastrophe which occurred back in 1985. Imagine, then, the excitement that Howard Carson, an amateur archeologist, experienced when, in crossing the perimeter of an abandoned excavation site, he felt the ground give way beneath him and found himself at the bottom of a shaft which, judging from the DO NOT DISTURB sign hanging from an archaic doorknob, was clearly the entrance to a still-sealed burial chamber. Actually, the site is an old motel. As Howard Carson proceeds to label every artifact erroneously and draw hilarious conclusions about what he discovers, readers are invited to think how they, too, might become amateur archaeologists, piecing together vividly real characters from the artifacts they leave behind.



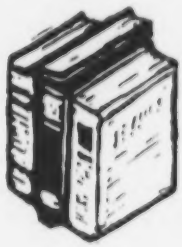
MacLachlan, Patricia. *All the Places to Love.* HarperCollins, 1994.
Hardback: 0-06-021098-2.

What an extraordinary find! This book belongs on every teacher's shelf as they work with kids to help them find the *important* topics to write about that come from their everyday world—the world that truly matters to them. In this tender piece, a youngster recalls each time initials were carved into the barn rafters signifying the birth of a new child in the family. Gentile, sensitive, personal—this piece has moments of grandeur written into every page.

Magdanz, James. ***Go Home, River.*** **Alaska Northwest Books, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-88240-476-8.**

If you live in the Pacific Northwest, the traditions of the Coastal Indian tribes are a part of the local culture and lore. This piece, historically accurate and entertaining (a rare combination) is the story of a young Alaska Eskimo boy as he explores a river from its mountainous beginnings to its eventual terminating point in the delta. The journey is one of self-discovery for the main character (never named) as well, and readers will find themselves drawn into each part of this unique and reverent story. Use this piece to teach Alaska history, Eskimo culture, the water cycle, and geography. Use it to show how accurate information can be woven into the context of a story. Use it to help students understand their own personal journeys of discovery.

Marshall, Rita. ***I Hate to Read!*** **Creative Editions, 1992. Hardcover: ISBN 1-56846-005-8.**



OK, OK, I'll admit it. I bought this book because of the title. But, it turned out to be a real gem. Third-grader Victor Dickens goes out of his way to avoid books, but one day, he inadvertently looks at a book and the characters become so real for him that he begins to care and turn the pages, and zap . . . we got him!

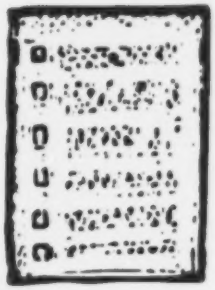
Mathers, Petra. ***Sophie and Lou.*** **HarperTrophy, 1991. Paperback: ISBN 0-06-4433331-5.**

Love stories just don't come much more endearing than this. Sophie, who is painfully shy, learns to dance in the safety of her own cozy home, peeking wistfully through the window at *KICK UP YOUR HEELS* dance studio across the street. Soon, inspired by her newfound agility, Sophie is swinging with the best of them and dreaming of new dancing shoes. She meets the infatuated and gentle Lou, and the rest is history. A beautiful way to explore the themes of overcoming shyness and helping one's inner self to blossom.

McLerran, Alice. ***Roxaboxen.*** **Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1991. Hardcover: ISBN 0-688-07592-4.**

This story is based on events that really happened to Alice McLerran's mother. The author has recreated the magical world her mother and relatives describe in letters, diaries, and maps. She presents us with "a celebration of the active imagination, of the ability of children to create, even with the most unpromising materials, a world of fantasy so real and multidimensional that it earns a lasting place in memory." This is Roxaboxen, a reminder that writing should tap this creative spark and be allowed to roam free. Perhaps your students have created a memorable place like Roxaboxen and are ready to write about it—or maybe this could be the beginning of other imaginary and special places.

Moss, Marissa. ***Amelia's Notebook.*** **Tricycle Press, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 1-883672-18-X.**



Here's a book that just cries out, "Pick me up!" Intended to be an example of the versatility of a writer's notebook, (see Ralph Fletcher's *A Writer's Notebook* for more details) this book is absolutely charming. You get a peek inside a young writer's head and observe first-hand the many different ways a writer deals with a topic. It's clever, funny, and a guaranteed hit with students who know just how hard it is to get any privacy in this hectic world of ours! (Other editions on delightful Amelia topics available, too!)

Nye, Naomi Shihab. ***Benito's Dream Bottle.*** **Simon & Schuster, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-02-768467-9.**

Where *do* dreams come from? In this magical picture book, Benito's grandmother can't remember her dreams and young Benito searches his imagination for answers to his own dreams while exploring all sorts of delightful ways to help his grandmother remember. "Dreams are delivered by angels!" "Dreams ripen on trees!" "Dreams come out of elbows and toes!" A beautiful story to inspire ideas for stretching our imaginations through language.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. ***Sitti's Secrets.*** **Aladdin (Simon & Schuster), 1994. Paperback: ISBN 0-689-81706-1.**

A book about connections, this is a sensitive and thoughtful human story about the similarities we all share as we try to find our place in the world. Through the eyes of an Arabian American girl, we experience her bond with her Arabian grandmother and the rich culture that is a part of their life. I haven't found many books that do as fine a job with language barriers and very sensitive politics as this one. This piece would serve well as a model for building a sense of international community.

Oberman, Sheldon. ***The Always Prayer Shawl.*** **Boyd Mills Press, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 1-878093-22-3. (Sydney Taylor Award: Association of Jewish Libraries, National Jewish Book Award from the Jewish Book Council.)**

In a world of constant change, Adam, a young Jewish boy from Czarist Russia during the revolution, uses the treasured family prayer shawl to validate his Jewish traditions and give him the wisdom and strength to survive an extraordinary time in history. A deeply satisfying book, the story of the prayer shawl is richly told and thoughtful in its message. Watercolor illustrations are among my favorites, too, and so I find the pictures particularly well-suited to the topic.

Prather, Jo Beecher. ***Mississippi Beau.*** **Eakin Press, 1994. Paperback: ISBN 0-89015-961-0.**

Ever wondered what treasures are housed in your state capitol building? Author Jo Prather did and began to research the beautiful capitol building in Jackson, Mississippi in hopes that her piece would allow Mississippi school children a peak inside the historic site. With an eye toward the young reader, Prather creates the story of a squirrel, Beaureguard Eisenhower Calvinlee Davis, to tell the story and reveal the treasures of this state building. What a wonderful model this is for children to learn how to research, use information, and reshape it into a piece that informs and tells a story at the same time!

Ringgold, Faith. *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky.* Crown, 1992. Paperback: ISBN 0-517-58767-X.

It's an art to capture so much rich history in such a short amount of space and words, but Faith Ringgold is one of the best in the field. She tackles an important subject, such as this one on the Underground Railroad, and teaches us about the role of the escaped slaves, the American Indians, the Abolitionists, and the Quakers. Her language is precise, honed, and powerful. Ringgold uses dialogue to allow us to understand this important part of American history through the eyes of those most directly involved.

Robinson, Aminah Brenda Lynn. *A Street Called Home.* Harcourt Brace, 1997. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-201465-9.

After you read this uniquely formatted and expressive book you may know more about Mount Vernon Avenue than you do about your own street. At first glance, it is a fold-out book. Each page represents a person who lives on the street and their job or role. But then open the door . . . you walk in and find a delightful piece written in exquisite detail about the person. Then, stand the book on its side and it folds out, accordion style, into a display. An inspiring idea for students to look at and create their own "Street Called Home" or perhaps a book about the people at school. Every time I look at this book I see more—it's not only clever, but has vivid and descriptive detail on every page.

Rosen, Michael, Editor. ***Home.*** **Charlotte Zolotow Books, 1992. Hardcover: ISBN 0-06-021788-X.**

In this collection of 30 stories, poems, and illustrations, celebrated children's authors give a rich and diverse response to the question "What does HOME mean?" From Grandma's kitchen table, to the mysteries of a dark spooky closet, from humorous to serious—the range of answers is complete.

Schaefer, Carole Lexa. ***The Squiggle.*** **Crown, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 10-517-70047-6.**

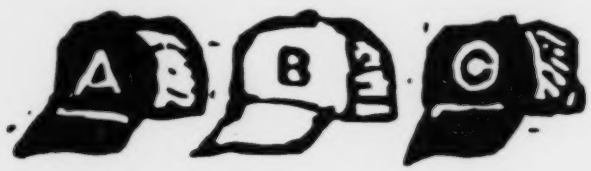
Some things are not what they appear, and this wonderfully creative story is all about that. This piece, best suited for younger readers and writers, is a charming story of what happens to a piece of string once it is in the hands of a delightfully imaginative young Chinese girl.

Schroeder, Alan. ***Ragtime Tumpie.*** **Little, Brown, 1989. Paperback: ISBN 0-316-77504-5.**

Sepia-tinted watercolors and no-nonsense language recount the warm and understated story of how legendary dancer Josephine Baker, born into abject poverty in St. Louis, Missouri, discovers her own unique and remarkable talent. With the help of an encouraging mother, "Ragtime Tumpie" acquires the indomitable spirit that will carry her far from her St. Louis beginnings into worldwide fame. The author begins with a few simple facts, but embellishes them with believable characterizations and just enough detail to satisfy the reader's curiosity. An excellent example of how to tell a simple story well without getting bogged down in trivia and without telling too much.

Shannon, George. ***Tomorrow's Alphabet.*** **Greenwillow Books (William Morrow), 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-688-13504-8.**

A splendid gift from an insightful friend, Gaye Lantz, who knows a book that will inspire kids to write and think when she sees one! This unusual ABC book helps students develop their higher-level thinking skills by playing with the alphabet, words, and connections—and the trick is, you have to do all that while thinking ahead to TOMORROW . . . Students could be challenged to make up their own tomorrow's alphabet or even yesterday's alphabet. You could give them the tomorrow word from a specific content area like science or history and let them figure out the today or yesterday word. This book is rich with possibilities. My favorite: "U is for stranger—tomorrow's US."



Van Allsburg, Chris. ***Jumanji.*** **Houghton Mifflin, 1981. Hardcover: ISBN 0-395-30448-2.**

In a good fantasy, the line between real and imaginary is sometimes hard to pinpoint. When a board game comes to life, is the world really changing, or is the change only in the minds of the players? It's a fascinating question, deftly posed by a writer who clearly thrills in the mystical magic of make-believe. Like all Van Allsburg books, this one provides an excellent illustration of how to give fantasy real appeal by keeping one foot in reality.

Weir, Bob and Wendy Weir. ***Panther Dream: A Story of the African Rain Forest.*** **Hyperion Books, 1991. Paperback: ISBN 1-56282-525-9. (Also available in book-cassette package 1-56282-076-1.)**

While hunting for food to feed his starving village, a young boy encounters a panther that teaches him how to conserve life in the rain forest. The information in this book is clear and accurate, but thanks to the picture book format, much more interesting and understandable than many textbooks on the same topic. Students relate to the main characters and their stories while internalizing contexts, facts, and subject material and applying it to their own and others' lives. Use to illustrate voice and word choice, too.

Wick, Walter. *A Drop of Water: A Book of Science and Wonder.* Scholastic, 1997. Hardcover: ISBN 0-590-22197-3.

Here's a great find! A book of science in picture book form, but heavy on content. This whole collection of unique photographs magnifies all the amazing states of how water can be observed—as ice, in rainbows, as steam, in frost, and in dew. Scientific processes such as evaporation, condensation, surface tension, and capillary attraction are explained in eloquent and simple text. This book is a magnificent blend of art and science—not to mention stand-out quality in expository writing.

Woolf, Virginia. *Nurse Lugton's Curtain.* Harcourt Brace, 1991. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-200545-5.

One of Virginia Woolf's most enchanting stories. As Nurse Lugton dozes in her chair by the hearth, the drawing-room curtain she has been sewing lies motionless across her lap. But in the curtain's intricate pattern of wild animals, lakes, bridges, and towns, a wonderful and magical world slowly unfolds. This is another excellent book to use in response to the favorite object prompt which might show students how to approach this topic in a personal, creative, and meaningful way.

We need to consider picture books as literature—
not children's literature—but as *literature.*

—Thomas Newkirk
Beyond Words: Picture Books for Older Readers and Writers

Books that illustrate strong

Organization

Enticing lead
Strong transitions with easy-to-follow sequencing
Powerhouse conclusion

Abercrombie, Barbara. ***Charlie Anderson.*** **Aladdin Books (Simon & Schuster), 1990. Paperback: ISBN 0-689-80114-9.**

At first glance, this is just a cute story about a cat. I love cats, so I liked it from the get-go. However, the ending was magnificent, and I realized the author carefully foreshadowed what was to come; I just hadn't picked up on the clues. It's easy to do with picture books. They are deceptively simple on the surface. This piece, however, is a prime example of how important organization can be to enhance and highlight the ideas and theme. And the theme in this case is how families can be very happy and successful and share time with each other even when one family becomes two families or even more due to divorce, remarriage, etc. I think you'll find that *Charlie Anderson* is a book you won't want to be without no matter what the age of the students with whom you work.

Ahlberg, Janet & Allan Ahlberg. ***It Was a Dark and Stormy Night.*** **Viking Press, 1993. Hardcover: ISBN 0-670-84620-1.**

Who says this is one of the most trite beginnings of all time? In this imaginative story, bloodthirsty brigands, pirates, parrots, and chocolate cake take you on an amazing journey where anything could happen *on a dark and stormy night . . .*

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Bang, Molly. *Chattanooga Sludge.* Gulliver Green Books (Harcourt Brace), 1996. ISBN 0-15-2163-45-X.

I've never seen a book formatted the way this one is. It will draw you into the story of Chattanooga Creek via the science, technology, and sheer willpower it took to save it from becoming an environmental disaster zone! From the first page (actually, the inside cover page), which takes you back through time, millions and millions of years ago, this piece moves through the story of the formation of the most significant rivers and land masses in the region with amazing speed and accuracy. A few pages in, you begin the story of Chattanooga Creek which unfolds not only in narrative form, but also with little rabbit-like characters on each page commenting on the most significant ideas as the story moves along. You'll learn so much as you read this book, and be delighted as you go. Molly Bang makes the world of environmental science accessible even to our earliest readers. For older readers, this piece is a real challenge—let them use this format to create their own research pieces.

Bang, Molly. *The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher.* Four Winds Press, 1980. Hardcover: ISBN 0-02-7081-40-0.

Wordless picture books cause the reader to look for and build connections and transitions from one idea or picture to the next. In this beautifully illustrated story, the Grey Lady takes her basket of strawberries on a walk through the city while the Strawberry Snatcher is close on her heels, lurking in shadows and stalking her as she goes. This wordless allegory relies heavily on little visual details as it leads you through the fantastic and improbable. Readers find themselves pouring over each picture to piece together a story of humor, suspense, and wonder. (Caldecott Honor Book.)

Banyai, Istvan. *Zoom* and *ReZoom*. Viking Press, 1995.
Hardcovers: ISBN 0-670-85804-8 and 0-670-86392-0.

Both of these colorful and original wordless picture books illustrate a series of events with all kinds of interesting and unique people and places. The hook with these books is organization. Each picture either zooms in or out from the last one, gradually revealing a bigger and bigger context for the settings and people. A bit confused? That's not surprising since these books are 100 percent visual and defy words to do them justice. These are the books referenced in one of the teaching strategy lesson plans for organization . . . check 'em out. They're fascinatingly (good word choice, eh?) addictive!

Blake, Quentin. *Clown*. Henry Holt, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-8050-4399-3.

Gotta love those wordless picture books for helping students make connections, see transitions, and look for sequencing. This one really caught my eye because it is by the illustrator most associated with Roald Dahl's works. Quentin Blake strikes out on his own here with the story of Clown who starts in a garbage can and ends up with a perfectly content family.

Blos, Joan W. *Old Henry*. Mulberry Books (William Morrow), 1987.
Paperback: ISBN 0-688-09935-1.

Poor old Henry! The neighbors want him to clean, paint, and tidy up. But he'd rather smell the flowers, chat over coffee, and enjoy his birds. Finally, tired of being pestered by busy-bodies who won't let him be himself, Henry moves away. But—surprise! Henry and his nosy neighbors miss one another. He writes a heartfelt note to the mayor: Could he come back, but on his own terms? There this warm and wonderful little tale ends, inviting student writers to invent a conclusion to their own liking. Perhaps a letter from the mayor to Henry? Tenderly told in soft, subtle rhyme. Beautifully illustrated.

Briggs, Raymond. *The Snowman.* Random House, 1978. Paperback: ISBN 0-394-88466-3.

An award-winning classic that's been called "a wordless wonder" (*The Christian Science Monitor*), this magical story of fantastic friendship tickles the imaginations of young and old alike. Wordless pictures offer students endless opportunities to generate personal text and to build transitions between events. What happens first? What happens next? How does the story end? Create an oral or written text to suit your own creative spirit. (American Library Association Notable Book, Boston Globe-Horn Book Award winner.)

Burton, Virginia Lee. *The Little House: Her Story.* Houghton Mifflin, 1942. Paperback: ISBN 0-395-25938-X.

This enduring tale of how the world surrounding a little house changes is just perfect for illustrating the use of time as an organizer for narrative writing. So much happens in this story of little house spirit vs. big city blight and smog—yet the text unfolds simply, always focusing on just what's important. If you haven't read Burton's story in a while, rediscover this charming old friend.

Christelow, Eileen. *What Do Authors Do?* Clarion Books (Houghton Mifflin), 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-395-71124-X.

The whole story of how authors get an idea, suffer the indignities of rejections, finally get the contract to be published, and then go through the entire editing/publishing process is chronicled in this delightful cartoon text. As a reader, you follow two parallel stories from beginning to end. The subtext explores the "mysteries" of the writing process from draft to draft. This is a great book to show students where ideas come from, how to fine-tune them, and how to share them with others. It's honest, clever, and quite funny. But the organization is what struck me. Every step, starting with the first thinking about the topic through publishing, is documented and set forth in a systematic and believable way. What a great treatment of such an interesting idea!

De Paola, Tomie. ***The Legend of the Blue Bonnet: An Old Tale of Texas.*** **Putnam, 1983. Paperback: ISBN 0-399-20937-9.**

The Bluebonnet, or Lupine, is the state flower of Texas. To the Commanche people, it also represents the legendary symbol of the Great Spirits' forgiveness and compassion for the people of the plains. According to the legend, She-Who-Is-Alone, a solitary, brave, and spiritual member of her nation, sacrifices what is most precious to her to free her people from the plague and torment of a long drought. When the rains come, the plains are covered in beautiful blue flowers, a sign that the Great Spirits will once again care for and protect the plains people. Tomie DePaola's unique illustrations bring a gentle grace to this tale of unselfish love. An outstanding example of strong organization structured around events that matter.

Doubilet, Anne. ***Under the Sea from A to Z.*** **Crown, 1991. Hardcover: ISBN 0-517-57836-0.**

A useful organizational structure for reports and presenting information is the A-Z alphabet book style. This lavishly illustrated book on sea animals makes a good place to begin. There are literally hundreds of new alphabet books on every topic imaginable now available in the picture book section of bookstores. Collect a variety to show students that creativity is an important part of making this format successful.

Drake, John W. ***Just Another Day.*** **Little Turtle Press, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-9633574-1-7.**

Definitely for the left-brained person. This text is a desktop publisher's dream. Once you begin to connect with the organization of this piece, then the main idea begins to reveal itself. *Just Another Day* is a journey—it's an adventure. It also has an important message for those of us who might (occasionally) fall into the drudges of the daily grind.

Duke, Kate. *Aunt Isabel Tells a Good One.* Dutton (Penguin), 1992. Paperback: ISBN 0-14-050534-2.

Here's a story within a story. A great book to use to teach children about the elements that make a piece work: a heroine, a hero, energy, and pizzazz, a little love interest, and even a bad guy or two. All the ingredients are contained between two covers. This piece, though probably best suited for primary and elementary readers, is enchanting and one participants at workshops pick up and exclaim, "Oh, I love this book. My kids read it over and over again."

Feiffer, Jules. *Meanwhile . . .* HarperCollins, 1997. Hardcover: 0-06-205155-5.

Want to emphasize the importance of good transitions in student-generated text? Here is the perfect piece to share! In this fanciful, clever, and delightful story, Raymond learns the power of the term "meanwhile" as he literally lives adventure to adventure to adventure.

Fletcher, Ralph. *Twilight Comes Twice.* Clarion Books (Houghton Mifflin), 1997. Hardcover: ISBN 0-395-84826-1.

What do you think of when you think of twilight? Dusk, dawn? Both? In Ralph Fletcher's first outing as a picture book author (with many more to come, I hope!) he has captured the essence of these two special times of the day with his own remarkable free-verse poetry:

> *"Twice each day*
> *a crack opens*
> *between night and day.*
> *Twice twilight*
> *slips through that crack."*

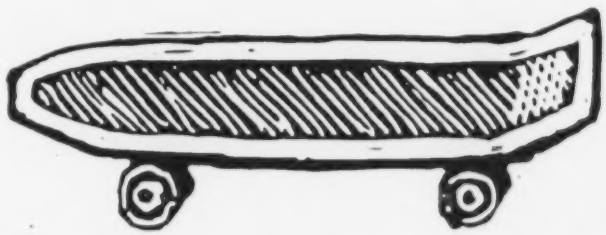
The words and their images make this a thoughtful and engaging piece of writing, but even more interesting to those of us trying to use text like this to help students create their own original works, is Fletcher's use of organization. This piece is organized to chronicle the moments from dusk to dawn—not the other way around which would have been a traditional approach to the topic. I like that; it makes me stop and think about how many other ideas could be organized differently in text to help the ideas stand out more clearly. Beautiful word choice, gentle phrasing—a piece that you'll want to read over and over again.

Fox, Mem. *Tough Boris.* Harcourt Brace, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-289612-0.

What is it about pirates that holds such universal fascination for children? From the first line, I have seen kids sit motionless, totally enrapt in this piece and delighting in the repeating refrains that unfold throughout it. They chime in even before you tell them to—it's just natural! We learn a bit about labels, too. Though most kids think of pirates as tough, rough, and mean, this book shows a kinder, gentler side. And if that's true about pirates, maybe it is true about other mean people in their lives?

Gaiman, Neil. *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish.* White Wolf, 1997. Hardcover: ISBN 9-781-565-049444.

I guarantee, positively, absolutely, that you won't find another book quite like this one. The story is funny, insightful, and the kind you absolutely can't put down once you start. But the formatting is what really grabs your attention. Told almost exclusively through dialogue, the reader gets a chance to experience firsthand the relationship between this brother and sister and how they, in turn, relate differently to their parents. What WOULD you trade your dad for? A transformer robot? A punching bag? Some baseball cards? Naw, a dad is worth a lot more than that! How about a goldfish in its own bowl? Now you're talking . . . The characters are real and alive—just about as honest a portrait of kids as you can sandwich between two covers. Here's a little glimpse into the main character's perspective on life: "Some people have great ideas maybe once or twice in their life, and then they discover electricity, or fire or outer space or something. I mean, the kind of brilliant ideas that change the whole world. Some people never have them at all. I get them two or three times a week."



Gantos, Jack. *Rotten Ralph.* Houghton Mifflin, 1976. Paperback: ISBN 0-395-24276-2.

Purposeful sentence beginnings (*Then, Next, The following day, After a while,* etc.) hook ideas together in ways that make reading easier and stories more understandable. This technique is exceptionally well-illustrated in *Rotten Ralph.* But you don't have to read it just for the great transitions! My, no! The pictures are hilarious. And Ralph's incorrigible rottenness is a perfect complement to owner Sarah's unflagging loyalty and affection. A favorite among cat lovers (and nonlovers) and humor-loving people in general. (Great for teaching voice, too!)

Gerrard, Roy. *The Faversham.* Sunburst Books, 1987. Paperback: ISBN 374-42293-1/0370.

A tidy tale told in delightful rhyme, which makes it fine for teaching sentence fluency as well. A "narrative sequence, recounting the exemplary, yet somehow otherworldly, lives of a Victorian officer and gentleman and his wife, *The Favershams* conveys an almost novelistic sense of the beauty, strangeness, and grandeur of everyday life in the years 1851-1914." — *Washington Post.* (Award winner for graphics and illustrations.)

Hall, Donald. *I Am the Dog/I Am the Cat.* Dial Books, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 0-8037-1504-8.

Just the perfect book to inspire writers to try a different organizational structure. Each page of this clever and deliciously funny book is either from the dog's or the cat's point of view—each one right after the other. And boy, are they different. Anyone who has ever owned either or both of these animals as pets will enjoy the subtle yet significant differences in the way the animals act and react to each other, their environment, and humans. And the pictures . . . they are a perfect match to the text.

Hest, Amy. *How to Get Famous in Brooklyn.* Simon & Schuster, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-689-80293-5.

How would you get famous in Brooklyn—or in any corner of the world, for that matter? Why, by writing, of course. Find out how to keep a journal, and fill it with interesting observations about the world that makes up your corner of the universe. Janie takes us on an observational tour of New York, showing us along the way that the tiniest of details make the stuff of good stories. A fine prelude to any observational exercise, from a nature walk to a museum visit. Helps students see the value of paying attention to the little unobtrusive details that the best writers just never seem to miss.

Hoberman, Mary Ann. *The Seven Silly Eaters.* Browndeer Press (Harcourt Brace), 1997. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-200096-8.

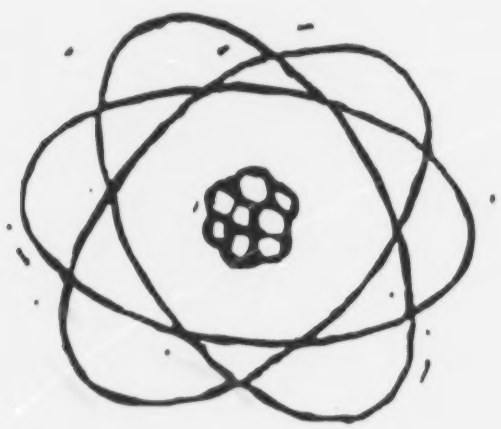
A delightful romp through the ever-growing and complicated life of a family with seven children, all of whom are very picky eaters. Mom and Dad are about the best-natured sorts in town, but there comes a time when even Mom can't take it any more and has a complete and total breakdown. The kids come to the rescue, however, and all is well at the end. I love the way this piece builds, child by child in sequence, then crashes and pulls itself all together again by the conclusion. This would make a great piece to analyze for the elements of a successful story.

Jenkins, Steve. *Big & Little.* Houghton Mifflin, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-395-72664-6.

One of the processes used to help students understand the trait of organization is comparison and contrast with sizes. This book (primarily suited for younger writers) is a collection of animals from all over the world, organized and shared in picture and text by size. It has lots of interesting little facts too. For example, did you know that the capybara is the world's largest rodent and weighs as much as 1,000 mice? No? Well, I didn't either. Illustrated with stunning cut-paper collages, here is a chance to explore BIG & little all over the world.

Kramer, Stephen P. *How to Think Like a Scientist.* HarperCollins, 1987. Hardcover: ISBN 0-690-04565-4.

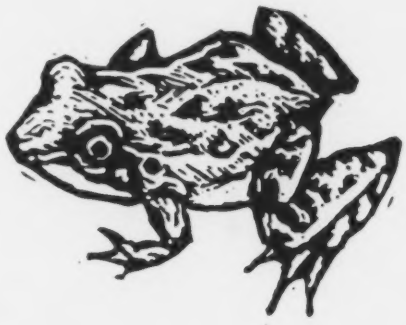
"Suppose you were riding your bicycle along a country road late one afternoon. Suppose you found a snake that had been killed by a car, but not too badly squashed. Suppose you scooped it into an empty plastic bag and tied the top of the bag in a tight knot. Suppose you put that bag into another plastic bag and sealed it tightly too. And suppose you found a nice spot way in the back of the freezer where you could keep the snake awhile, a place where your mother would never find it. . . . Well, with that snake and what you know about the scientific method, you could answer the question about dead snakes, tree branches, and rain all by yourself." Thus ends Steve Kramer's enlightening and student-friendly text on thinking scientifically. Through this extended picture book, students learn to set up hypotheses, work with control and experimental groups, record observations accurately, interpret results, and avoid misinformation—all in the context of everyday questions students themselves find interesting. Charmingly illustrated, beautifully organized, using the technique of posing and answering your own questions. Excellent for both ideas and voice, too.



Macaulay, David. *Black and White.* Houghton Mifflin, 1990. Hardcover: ISBN 0-395-52151-3.

"Warning: This book appears to contain a number of stories that do not necessarily occur at the same time. But it may contain only one story. Then again, there may be four stories. Or four parts of a story. Careful inspection of both words and pictures is recommended." One of the great illustrators of our time, David Macaulay invites readers to puzzle out the organization and therefore the story of this book. It's very intriguing and bound to create a lively discussion. (Caldecott Award winner.)

Mann, Pamela. *The Frog Princess?* Garth Stevens, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-8368-1352-9.



Talk about your surprise endings. *The Frog Princess?* is an absolute MUST for any classroom that really values reading and writing. Just when you think you've heard this story before, talented Pamela Mann delivers a punch line with implications for discussion about censorship, surprise endings, and stereotypes. I like to use this piece as a shared reading so the students listening get the full impact of the twist at the end, but you use it however you want—just use it. It's a winner for sure!

Mathers, Petra. *Kisses from Rosa.* Apple Soup, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-679-82686-6.

Being separated from your mother can be immensely traumatic for a child, even if the reason is a good one. In this lovely piece, Rosa's mother is very ill, so Rosa is sent to stay with Aunt Mookie at the farm. Although Rosa is terribly homesick and misses her mother dreadfully, she becomes fascinated with the farm's activities . . . like berry picking with old Mrs. Schmidt and visiting the cows with Cousin Birgit, and falling for Waldi, "the best dog in the whole wide world." Rosa sends kiss-filled letters to her mother brimming with love and encouragement. This is a heart-warming story based on the author's own experience.

Noble, Trinka Hakes. *Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch.* Puffin, 1987. Paperback: ISBN: 0-14-054564-6.

Rancher Hicks lives a very quiet life—nothing much ever happens. He goes into town and nothing much ever happens there, either. However, while he's in town, his wife Elna has more and more exciting experiences with each successive page. This whole delightful story is organized by the phrase "Meanwhile, back at the ranch," or "Meanwhile, back at Sleepy Gulch," as Rancher Hicks' day gets progressively more boring and Elna's gets wilder and wilder. This picture book would be a terrific model of how to organize using a repetitive phrase to move the reader through the text. Lively and fun—very imaginative. (Use for Ideas, too.)

Paul, Ann Whitford. *The Seasons Sewn.* Browndeer Press, Harcourt Brace, 1996. ISBN 0-15-276918-8.

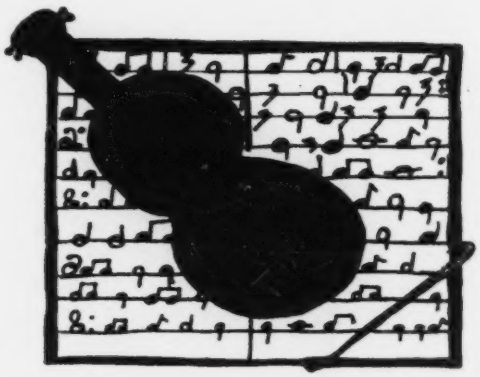
It is impossible for us to truly imagine what life was like on a farm more than a hundred years ago, but this fine work is a good start. Organized by quilt pattern, a sense of unity, harmony, and community unfold to show us a great deal of 19th century life. With its carefully illustrated and finely detailed quilt designs, readers of all ages will savor this wonderful book. I'm going to give a copy to my mom for Christmas—she's a quilter and will truly appreciate the detail and thoughtful treatment of the craft in this work.

Paulsen, Gary. *The Tortilla Factory.* Harcourt Brace, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-292876-6.

Using the cycle of life as the organizational structure, Gary Paulsen once again amazes us with his use of eloquent and simple everyday words. He is the master at writing prose so well that it reads like poetry—attention to every syllable, sound, and nuance of the language is always present. You'll love Ruth Paulsen's paintings which accompany this text—they are rich, earthy, and textured for perfect harmony.

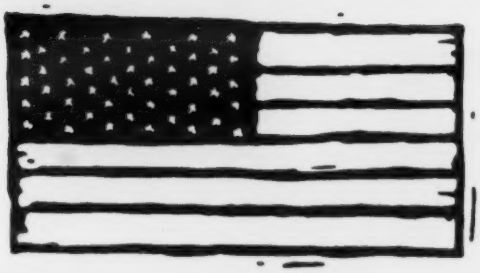
Pelés, Les Chats. ***Long Live Music.*** **Creative Editions (Harcourt Brace), 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-201310-5.**

Now here's a piece to inspire young writers through creative use of text and formatting. Walk/run through this whimsical journey of Phil and his dog, Pippo, as Silence the Giant takes all the musical instruments away. Follow the story upside down, in, and around through twists and turns—the book must be held in all different directions to read the text and keep the story moving. As a wonderful bonus, the reader also gets a short history of different musical instruments and music itself as the story unfolds.



Polacco, Patricia. ***My Ol' Man.*** **Philomel Books, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-399-22822-5.**

So many things about this book are worth talking about, but I am particularly struck by its powerful opening and the way the context of the story is framed in two short sentences. The piece moves with masterful pacing and perfectly constructed phrasing. And the story itself is magical and unique. I'd use this piece with Byrd Baylor's *The Rock*. Both books use rocks as the mysterious center for imagination and ideas.

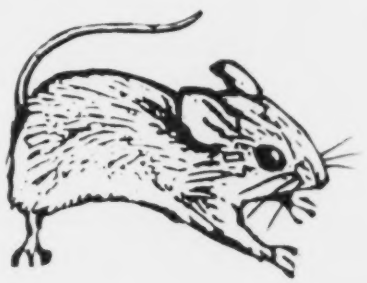


Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *The Flag We Love.* Charlesbridge, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-88106-845-4.

The Fourth of July usually falls outside of the school calendar, so to remind us of all that is American about this day, this poetic piece will be a good addition to your books honoring America's finest traditions and heritage. There are little tidbits of historical reference to the flag tucked in among descriptions of commonly held traditions related to this symbol. In an interesting organizational format, the piece is written in verse, but on each page are several starred facts which enhance our understanding and appreciation of the American flag.

Schories, Pat. *Mouse Around.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1991. Hardcover: ISBN 0-374-35080-9.

Follow the adventures of an adorable little mouse who finds himself out in the world struggling to make his way safely home to mother, brothers, and sisters. Using realistic, detailed pictures, this wordless picture book tells its story by emphasizing sequence and transitions. Good practice for writers of any age working with organization strategies!



Van Allsburg, Chris. ***The Mysteries of Harris Burdick.*** **Houghton Mifflin, 1984. Hardcover: ISBN 0-395-35393-9.**

"When Chris Van Allsburg was invited to the home of Peter Wenders, he discovered fourteen drawings that were, like pieces of a picture puzzle, clues to larger pictures. But the puzzles, the mysteries, presented by these drawings, are not what we are used to. They are not solved for us, as in the final pages of a book or a film's last reel. The solutions to these mysteries lie in a place at once close at hand, yet far more remote. They lie in our imagination." Looking for a good open-ended way to spark imagination and prompt writing? Try using these pictures, which also come in poster-sized prints available from the publisher.

Van Allsburg, Chris. ***Two Bad Ants.*** **Houghton Mifflin, 1988. Hardcover: ISBN 0-395-48668-8.**

If ever there was a model for good organization, it is an ant colony! In this inventive and highly creative story, the queen of the ant colony declares that a marvelous crystal which has been discovered in a faraway place, is the most delicious substance she has ever eaten. The other ants set out to bring it back to the queen, but not without a few twists and turns in between. Chris Van Allsburg is a master at creating strange yet satisfying tales of ordinary things played out with a twist. Here is a great piece to share with students as they follow the logic of the ant colony's quest and the inevitable consequences.

Viorst, Judith. ***Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day.*** **Aladdin Books, 1972. Paperback: ISBN 0-689-71173-5.**

Alexander knew it was going to be a terrible day when he woke up with gum in his hair. And it got worse . . . As this classic story unfolds, each event appears to make the day even worse than before. Use this story's organization to create students' own versions of what would make the worst day ever!

Walsh, Ellen Stoll. *Jack's Tale.* Harcourt Brace, 1997.
Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-200323-1.
Perfect to introduce the idea of the elements of story to our youngest readers and writers, *Jack's Tale* begins at the beginning, shows how to develop an "interesting middle" and end, of course, "happily ever after." Clever, original, and charming, this little piece has all the elements of a strong narrative along with just a dash of excitement and suspense.

Wiesner, David. *TUESDAY.* Clarion Books (Houghton Mifflin), 1991.
Hardcover: ISBN 0-395-55113-7.
In this inventive and clever book, David Wiesner uses the organizational structure of one day, Tuesday, to create a whole series of bizarre and improbable incidents. The book jacket describes it best: "The events recorded here are verified by an undisclosed source to have happened somewhere, U.S.A., on Tuesday. All those in doubt are reminded that there is always another TUESDAY."

Wiesner, David. *JUNE 29, 1999.* Clarion Books (Houghton Mifflin), 1992.
Hardcover: ISBN 0-395-59762-5.
Like Wiesner's other books, this one is alive with imagination. "June 29, 1999 is a date no one will forget, particularly Holly Evans of Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey. Holly had great expectations for her science project when she sent seedlings aloft into the ionosphere, but she never imagined results that would be thereto unprecedented in scale. Holly can't believe that she is responsible for the fantastic events of June 29, 1999—and it may be *just* possible that she is right!"

Williams, Vera B. ***A Chair for My Mother.*** **Greenwillow Books (William Morrow), 1982. Paperback: ISBN 0-688-04074-8.**

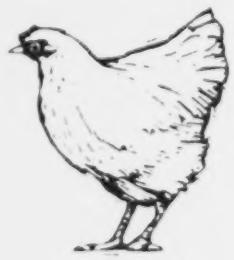
Among the simplest organizational structures for beginning storytellers is to set up a problem and solve it. This story does just that. A loving family has lost their home to fire. Mom is a waitress, on her feet all day, exhausted when she returns to their tiny, barren apartment. Together, mother, daughter and granddaughter save mom's tips in a jar and watch their treasure grow till they have enough to buy her a special chair as bright and glowing as the love they feel for her. This is a story of courage, caring and tenderness told in direct, unsentimental language that reveals characters' feelings through their actions. A book to make you smile inside.

Winter, Jeanette. ***Josefina.*** **Harcourt Brace, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-201091-2.**

Josefina is an artist and this is her story. The setting is Ocotlan, Mexico where young Josefina learns to work the clay and make one figure, then two, and more and more until she progressively adds to her beautifully constructed clay house each of the pieces that make it whole. Gracious in its language, poetic in phrasing, *Josefina* is a piece that should delight young readers with its patterns and repeating sequences.

Zemach, Margot. ***It Could Always be Worse.*** **Sunburst Books, 1976. Paperback: ISBN 0-374-43636-3.**

A poor, unfortunate man thinks his life is in terrible shape because his home is overcrowded and everyone fights all the time. The man consults his rabbi, who instructs him to bring a succession of farm animals into his home—making each day worse and worse—until finally, the man gets rid of all the farm animals and thinks life is once again good and peaceful. The structure of this book is a good one for students to copy when organizing their own stories. (Caldecott Honor book.)



Zolotow, Charlotte. *The Old Dog.* HarperCollins, 1995.

Hardcover: ISBN 0-06-024409-7.

Here's a book that is perfectly suited to expand the idea of voice, simple and true and coming from the heart. I love this piece by acclaimed author, Charlotte Zolotow, but somehow, I'd like to see it end one page sooner. If you have a copy of this book, ask your students what they think. Does the ending work the way it is? Or does the author go one step too far?

The texts children write are more likely to resemble the texts of picture books than longer books composed of extended chapters. Whatever their reading preferences they [children older than second grade] will need the picture books as models for their writing.

—Thomas Newkirk

Beyond Words: Picture Books for Older Readers and Writers

Books that illustrate strong

Voice

Lively engagement and commitment
Audience and purpose for writing are in sync
The writer enjoyed it and hopes you will, too

Abeel, Samantha. *Reach for the Moon.* Pfeifer-Hamilton, 1994.
Hardcover: ISBN 1-57025-013-8.
A moving collection of short writings and poems by a 12-year-old learning-disabled student struggling to find her voice. Samantha, a remarkably gifted writer for whom math is a nightmare, teaches us an important lesson about labeling. Her riveting story shows how a teacher's insightful support can literally turn a confusing and frightening world of learning into one filled with promise and possibility. Don't miss the introduction—it will inspire and affirm.

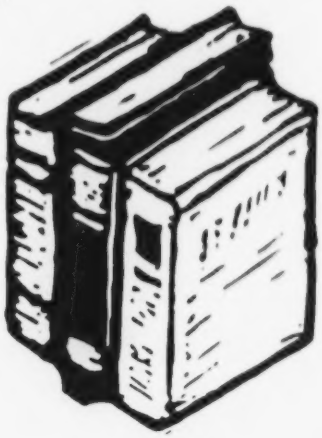
Angelou, Maya. *Life Doesn't Frighten Me.* Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1993.
Hardcover: ISBN 1-55670-288-4.
One of the most powerful picture books of all time! Through Angelou's brave and defiant poem, this glorious book challenges each of us to examine the dark and scary images hidden deep inside ourselves. The poem unfolds through a series of contrasting drawings and ideas—from big ghosts in a cloud to panthers and strangers in the dark. Readers are urged to summon their inner strength, to examine and dispel frightening thoughts, and to find faith in themselves.

Boyd, Candy Dawson. *Daddy, Daddy, Be There.* Philomel Books, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-399-22745-8.

With its repeating refrain, "Daddy, Daddy, be there," echoing through the pages, this simple, yet poignant piece pulls at every parent's heart. It reminds us that children need unconditional and forever love—as much for the everyday business of living as for the events that mark our lives. I like this book so much because it is real; it shows families in conflict as well as in harmony. But always, it calls to us to hold out our hands and hearts to our children because they are desperate for the sense of belonging that only a family can bring. (Thank you, Janet Malek, for this wonderful gift.)

Bradley, Marie. *More Than Anything Else.* Orchard Books, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-531-09464-2.

More Than Anything Else, young Booker T. Washington wants to learn to read, only the reader of this eloquent and moving book doesn't know the main character is Booker T. Washington until the end, which makes the voice even more powerful and underscores the theme of this book with additional import. On the surface, it is an affirming tribute to the power that language brings to any person's life; but the book can be read as a reminder that language is power and this book is a dramatic example of what happens when one group of people are denied access to that power.



Bruchac, Joseph. *Between Earth & Sky: Legends of Native American American Sacred Places.* Harcourt Brace, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-200042-9.

There are many stories about sacred places from coast to coast, east to west. This majestic picture book celebrates ten stories that help us understand the land around us—from mountains to oceans, prairies to canyons. It teaches us how to look at the beauty of our world through eyes which seek balance and harmony. I think my favorite is the Hopi legend which explains why we have canyons and craters on the earth. It seems that people once came from another world beneath this one. And before that, people came from another world. Each time things started to go wrong in these worlds (people getting jealous, fighting each other, forgetting to respect the sacred) the coyote stole the water monster's child. When the water monster got its child back, he retaliated by flooding the world. Each time this happened, people had to climb to higher places to be safe. The canyons are part of our world today to remind us of why and how we lost the hearts of some of our lands.

Bunting, Eve. *December.* Harcourt Brace, 1997. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-201434-9.

In this sensitive and poignant Christmas story, young Simon has a magical experience which changes how he thinks of this special day for the rest of his life. Through the richly illustrated text, we explore the generosity of Simon's mother as she invites a homeless woman into their house for Christmas Eve and Simon's reaction to sharing this time with a stranger. Even in this short amount of text, the reader watches a character develop, mature and reflect. Eve Bunting's style is one which invites introspection; this latest piece is another jewel in her crown.

Bunting, Eve. *Fly Away Home.* Clarion Books (Houghton Mifflin), 1991. Paperback: ISBN 0-395-66415-2.

A moving story of a homeless boy and his father who live at the airport, struggling not to be noticed. The young boy sees a small bird caught inside the airport, trying valiantly to get out, and draws a parallel with his own life. In this story little things make big moments. Contrast this piece with Maurice Sendak's *We Are All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy* to see how different voices tell the same tragic stories.

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Bunting, Eve. ***Going Home.*** **Joanna Cotler Books (HarperCollins), 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-06-026296-6**

There is a special bond between Eve Bunting and her readers. She writes about a variety of topics, but each one reaches out and touches your heart in such a gentle and personal way, you feel as though the story was written just for you. In this fine, fine piece, a family born in Mexico now lives and works in the United States. " 'We are going home, Carlos,' Mama says, hugging me. She sparkles with excitement. 'Home is here,' she says. But it is there, too. She and Papa are happy. My sisters and I are not so sure. Mexico is not our home." So begins a Christmas vacation to La Perla to remember. The journey symbolizes the family's struggle to maintain their past, honor their culture, and yet provide opportunities for a new life for the children. This is a remarkable book, able to weave together in a very short space so much that is important for all of us to think about as we teach and learn with our students from all over the world.

Bunting, Eve. ***The Wall.*** **Clarion Books (Houghton Mifflin), 1990. Paperback: ISBN 0-395-62977-2.**

A father and his young son visit the Vietnam Memorial to find the name of the grandfather the boy never knew. It's a tale that never flinches from the heartache and sadness of the situation, but gains spirit from the sense of pride and honor father and son find together. An excellent text for illustrating the integrity and power of voice in writing that is not derived from humor.

Chief Seattle ***Brother Eagle, Sister Sky: A Message from Chief Seattle.*** **Dial Books, 1991. Hardcover: ISBN 0-8037-0969-2.**

"How can you buy the sky? How can you own the rain and the wind?" So began the moving words attributed to a great American Indian chief over 100 years ago. They are words that eloquently and poetically captured the central belief of Native Americans: that this earth and every creature on it is sacred. Susan Jeffers is masterful as her most extraordinary paintings illuminate the words and world vision of Native Americans.

Coerr, Eleanor. *Sadako.* Putnam, 1993. Hardcover: ISBN 0-399-21771-1.

Caldecott medalist Ed Young's beautiful pastel illustrations bring to life the classic story of Sadako and her brave struggle against the leukemia she develops at age 12—10 short years after the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. The Japanese legend holds that if a person who is ill makes a thousand paper cranes, the gods will grant that person's wish to be well again. This story is about the courage and strength of Sadako and the lessons of our own history. (Editor's Choice, Gold Award.)

Coleman, Evelyn. *White Socks Only.* Albert Whitman, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-8075-8955-1.

This is a magical story inspired by the author's personal memories of things she could not do and places she could not go because of her skin color. It is written with integrity and courage. However, it is also a celebration of African American tradition and culture which leaves the reader moved and hopeful.

Curry, Barbara K. and James Michael Brodie. *Sweet Words So Brave.* Zino Press, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 1-55933-179-8.

Middle- and high school-aged students will appreciate the quality of this literature collection honoring the traditions of African American writers. From Phyllis Wheatley, the first published African American poet, to Toni Morrison, the first African American to win the Nobel Prize for literature, this vibrantly illustrated picture book will inspire and teach.

Dahl, Roald. *The Twits.* Bantam-Skylark, 1982. Paperback: ISBN 0-553-15343-9.

The Twits are hardly the ideal married couple. Mrs. Twit puts worms in Mr. Twit's spaghetti—until he complains it's a little more chewy than his favorite brand. He retaliates by adding just a smidgen of wood to her walking cane each day, telling her she suffers from the dreaded shrinks and will probably have to be stretched—painful though that might be. Great f :n, with the ribald, to-the-point humor for which Roald Dahl is famous.

Fox, Mem. ***Whoever You Are.*** Harcourt Brace, 1997.
Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-200787-3.

"Little one, whoever you are, there are little ones just like you all over the world." So begins this magical book that reminds us that we may look different, live in different places, and go to different schools, but we all cry the same, bleed the same, and feel pain the same. The way this piece is written could easily make it a read-aloud with different students assigned to individual lines and parts. The refrain adds a sense of roundness and texture, but most important of all is the common bond of humanity that Mem Fox so masterfully weaves into all her pieces. This one in particular reminds us all to celebrate our differences and our similarities for we have much to learn from one another.

Ganeri, Anita. ***Out of the Ark: Stories from the World's Great Religions.***
Harcourt Brace, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN: 0-15-200943-4.

Organized by theme, this lavishly illustrated picture book compares stories from diverse religions on topics such as creation, floods, animals, birth, courtship, and marriage. Other sections explore war, pestilence, persecution, and lives of religious leaders. Aimed at elementary-aged students through high school and adult, this text will fascinate you. I found myself wanting to know someone else who was reading it, too, so we could talk about the differences and similarities in world religions. This would be a great choice for a book group to discuss if you are fortunate enough to belong to one. If not, start one and suggest this title. I'd like to have prints of much of the watercolor art from this book—it's so beautiful, that I'd frame it and hang it in my office and home. Rich with purples, reds, golds, blues, and greens, the jewel tones tie together the entire collection of stories for a satisfying sense of continuity and truth.

Goble, Paul. *The Gift of the Sacred Dog.* Macmillan, 1980. Paperback: ISBN 0-02-043280-1.

To the nomadic buffalo hunters of the Great Plains, the horses introduced by the Spanish were truly miraculous animals—strong, swift, able to carry great burdens long distances. These gifts from the Great Spirit were called by many names: Big Dog, Elk Dog, Mysterious Dog, and Sacred Dog. In this richly illustrated book, Paul Goble tells the legend of the Sacred Dog as envisioned through the eyes of the Sioux people. A quiet, yet powerful example of voice.

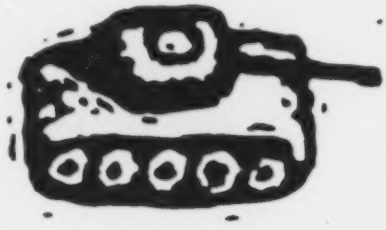
Hathorn, Libby. *Way Home.* Crown, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 0-517-59909-0.

Dark, shadowy pictures torn right from the world of the street combine with passionate but understated text to create a mood that blends fear, compassion, warmth, hope, and courage. Follow the boy Shane on a one-night adventure through foreboding alleyways, over fences, past menacing gangs, and through the blaring noise of street traffic, and feel yourself becoming part of his world. In brilliant contrast to this stark portrait, author Libby Hathorn fashions a warm bond between Shane and a small orphaned cat whose name—Catseyes, Bestcat, Catlegs, Hungry, Noname, Mycat—whimsically changes to reflect his newfound owner's thoughts and moods. In a striking and unforgettable final image, Hathorn brings new definition to the concept of "home" as one child of the streets sees and lives it. Passionate and insightful. An original voice.

Hughes, Langston. *The Block.* Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-87099741-6.

In his incredible introduction, Bill Cosby summarizes this tribute to Harlem well: "If [Romare] Bearden shows us the sights, then Langston Hughes gives us the sounds. Street noise and sermons, courting and complaining, rumors and reveries—they are all echoed in these poems of city life. The voices, too, are familiar. They remind us of our neighbors, our teachers, our friends." Indeed. This imaginative combination of collage and poetry pulsates with life and the undeniable rhythm of the street. Come—dance along! Enjoy the rhythm and the voice. Then, perhaps, ask students to create a collage of their own neighborhood life, a tribute to the sights, voices, echoes, shadows, sounds that make up their own world.

I dream of peace: Images of war by children of former Yugoslavia. **UNICEF, HarperCollins, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 0-06-251128-9.**



Captured here in pictures, prose, and poetry are the horrors of war as seen and felt through the eyes of Yugoslavian children. Each section contains vivid imagery of the death and destruction that is part of everyday life in this war-torn region. This book makes a wonderful companion piece to *Zlata's Diary*, a 12-year-old's moving day-by-day account of life in the middle of war.

Johnston, Tony. ***Amber on the Mountain.*** **Dial Books, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 0-8037-1219-7.**

This is a sweet piece that tells the story of a friendship based on reading, books, and most of all, the value of learning.

Kramer, Stephen P. ***Caves.*** **Carolrhoda Books, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-87614-447-4.**

"Far below the earth's surface, water drips from the roof of a cave. The drops fall through darkness into a large stone room no one has ever seen. No bird has ever sung here. The scent of wildflowers has never hung in the air. For thousands of years, the tomblike silence has been broken only by the sound of falling water . . . Drip . . . Drip . . . Drip." Irresistible as the mystery of the cave itself is the newest text by master science writer Steve Kramer. Kramer's friendly text and Kenrick L. Day's outstandingly detailed color photographs bring the world of speleology to rich and vivid life. The author's clear passion for his subject echoes in text that is wonderfully clear and understandable. Use this book to illustrate the value of voice in expository writing, or as an equally fine illustration of technical writing at its best: Kramer makes the complex beautifully penetrable and accessible even to young readers, yet never fails to pique our curiosity. From the history of caves to the diversity found among nature's cave dwellers to the fragile nature of caves themselves, this book has it all. Excellent for ideas and word choice, as well.

Little, Jean. *Hey World, Here I Am!* HarperTrophy, 1986. Paperback: ISBN 0-06-440384-X.

Essays about life, love, friendship, fear, pride, wins and losses, discovery, parents and children, growing up, and growing old. All the things you think about and care about are probably touched on, in some way, in this marvelous collection of writings that shows us the world through the eyes of young adolescent Kate Bloomfield. Kate is a keen observer of life, and an honest essayist, who dares to tell precisely the truth about any and all topics. Her voice is refreshing, sparkling, daring, and touching. Little captures so well that in-between world of a young person who is beyond childhood but not quite ready to embrace adulthood. The text—some prose, some poetry—will poke you in the ribs one moment and tug at your heart the next. A book to share, to read aloud and to yourself, to treasure, to give to a friend.

Littlechild, George. *This Land is My Land.* Children's Book Press, 1993. Hardcover: ISBN 0-89239-119-7.

"I paint at night. I'm inspired to paint at night. I stand outside staring at the night sky and I begin to dream. The sky is like a doorway into the other world, the Spirit world." In this wonderful collection of Native American art coupled with personal written responses, George Littlechild shows and tells what it means to be a Native American artist about to enter the 21st century. Littlechild's simple, eloquent style reverently depicts Native American customs, traditions, rituals and history. The book celebrates culture, life, and individual talent. The insights woven throughout the reflective text make this book ideal for introducing introspection and self-reflection, along with the elegant presentation of personal ideas. Littlechild's voice rings with power, yet never overstates the writer's feelings. Like the paintings themselves, the writer's voice retains a quiet dignity that touches the reader's spirit.

Louie, Ai-Ling. *Yeh-Shen: a Cinderella Story from China.* Sandcastle Books, 1982. Paperback: ISBN 0-399-21594-8.

A collection of famous fairy tales from around the world would have to include this version of Cinderella, which is at least 1,000 years older than the earliest known Western version. *Yeh-Shen* has a misty, dreamlike air, a much different voice from that heard in other versions you may compare it to. Students will be impressed with the brilliant splendor of the words and illustrations which complement each other beautifully.

MacLachlan, Patricia. *What You Know First.* Joanna Cotler Books (HarperCollins), 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-06-024413-5.

What do you do when you're a child and your parents decide it's time to move and leave behind all that is so familiar–an ocean of grass, an endless sky, the cottonwood trees? How do you capture all the wonderful memories of the sights and sounds and smells of the things you knew first and love best? This lovingly told story is rich with place and memory. Perfect for an idea of how you find things to write about that really matter to you—the little things that make our lives different from everyone else's.

Matthaei, Gay and Jewel Grutman. *The Ledgerbook of Thomas Blue Eagle.* Thomasson-Grant, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 1-56566-063-3.

"Gorgeous," is often the first word readers utter as they leaf reverently through this remarkable journal of a young Sioux boy's transition into the white world at the Carlisle Indian School. The journal is fiction based on fact; Thomas Blue Eagle is not a real person. Yet the passion underlying the handwritten words, together with the magnificent and telling pictographs, creates such a feeling of authenticity that the reader is truly transported to another time, place, and experience. Each illustration, each detail, is thoughtfully assembled from actual historical accounts and pictorial records of young Indian children who struggled to move from one world into another while retaining a sense of identity, dignity, and spiritual closeness to the Earth they treasure.

McDonald, Megan. ***My House Has Stars.*** **Orchard Books, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-531-09529-0.**

Collections of thoughts on similar topics but from multiple perspectives are a perfect fit with the trait of voice. However, you might want to consider using a resource like this one for ideas, too. *My House Has Stars* visits homes all over the world: the Philippines, Nepal, Ghana, Japan, the American Southwest, Mongolia, Brazil, and Alaska. Each child's voice echoes the same refrain, "My house has stars," and then describes what that means from their region and cultural perspective. A sensitive, thoughtful, and genuinely rare book, this piece offers a unified vision of our world through children's eyes and the geography of the earth.

Munsch, Robert N. ***The Paper Bag Princess.*** **Annick Press, 1993. Paperback: ISBN 0-920236-16-2.**

Ever wonder how those fairy tale people always stay so clean and neat? In the real world, heroines fall down and get dirty, and that also happens in this tribute-to-realism adventure of the rather inept Prince Ronald and his rescuer, Princess Elizabeth. She's more than a vision in pink. This princess bests dragons, masterminds her own adventures, and knows the difference between a true prince and a shabby imitation. Pokes light fun at some traditions that have been asking for it.

Patterson, Francine. ***Koko's Kitten.*** **Scholastic, 1985. Hardcover: ISBN 0-590-33811-0.**

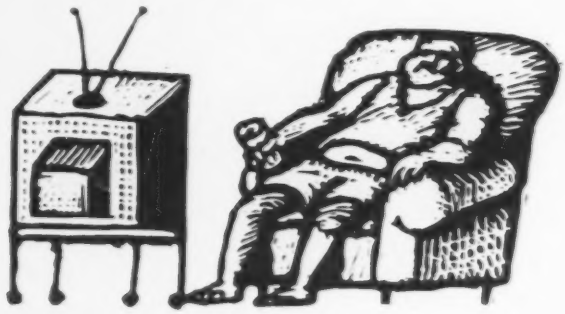
Meet Koko, a 13-year-old gorilla who, under the care and loving guidance of scientist Dr. Francine Patterson, becomes strikingly adept at communicating about herself and her world through American Sign Language, or ASL. Koko also has a passion for cats, and this fascinating book is dedicated to Koko's pet and companion, All Ball. A remarkable study of animals' ability to use language to express love, anger, need, sorrow, and joy. An excellent example of informational, nonfiction writing with voice.

Paulson, Tim. ***The Beanstalk Incident.*** **Birch Lane, 1990. Hardcover: ISBN 1-55972-048-4.**

The infamous giant takes a stand to clear up a popular misconception about his guilt in the famous fairy tale "Jack and the Beanstalk." In this upside-down fairy tale, you get to read the original as well as the story retold from the giant's point of view. An ingenious way to explore voice with student writers who will quickly see how much voice is dependent on the point of view of the writer. (See also *Cinderella: The Untold Story* by Russell Shorto.)

Polacco, Patricia. ***Aunt Chip and the Great Triple Creek Dam Affair.*** **Philomel Books, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-399-22943-4.**

"Absolutely everybody in Triple Creek loved their TV sets. No one could remember a time when there wasn't a TV in every home. Nor could they remember when they weren't watching TV." So begins the deliciously wonderful story of *Aunt Chip and the Great Triple Creek Dam Affair.* You see, in this town, books were no longer read; they weren't even used as sources of information. Aunt Chip was the sole hold out. She remembered and even talked about her beloved books and their powerful stories. But for the rest of the town books were doorstops or used to hold the roof up, sit on, or eat off. Can you imagine? This piece is a MUST have in every classroom. The rediscovery of printed words, their power and imagination, is a story that you will want to share with students over and over again. Patricia Polocco is a master at teaching and delighting at the same time. BUY THIS BOOK!



Polacco, Patricia. *Mrs. Katz and Tush.* Yearling Books, 1992. Paperback: ISBN 0-440-40936-5.

A heartwarming tale which illustrates the suffering and triumph of African American history right alongside Jewish heritage. This story is about respect, appreciation, bonding, and a love that grows from shared experience. The characters are vivid, hopeful, proud, and compassionate.

Polacco, Patricia. *Pink and Say.* Philomel Books, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 0-399-22671-0.

The refrain, "This is the hand, that has touched the hand, that has touched the hand, that shook the hand of Abraham Lincoln," will echo through your head and heart long after this historical fiction story ends. A Civil War tale of how a young, frightened, and wounded White solder is saved by a Black soldier, this story reminds us of the horrors of war and the inequities of race. Beautifully told, rich with substance and messages of shared humanity. (A three handkerchief book, and five star review from our readers.)

Ringgold, Faith. *Tar Beach.* Crown, 1991. Hardcover: ISBN 0-517-58030-6.

"I will always remember when the stars fell down around me and lifted me up above the George Washington Bridge." Thus begins the amazing, soaring journey of Cassie Louise Lightfoot, from "Tar Beach," the rooftop of her family's Harlem apartment building, to the George Washington Bridge and beyond, wherever her eight-year-old spirit and imagination will take her. Anyone can fly, Cassie tells us; it's just a matter of longing to be free and claiming the world for your own. Author Faith Ringgold has woven a magical, wondrous tale that is part story, part painting, part traditional quilt. Share the magic of a loving family's tradition that became a poetic tribute to the spirit of a child. (Winner of the Caldecott Medal and the Coretta Scott King Award.)

Rosen, Michael J., Editor. *Purr . . . Children's Book Illustrators Brag about Their Cats.* Harcourt Brace, 1996.
Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-200837-3.

What could be more delightful than the vision of 30 respected and noted children's book illustrators all sharing their perspectives on cats? In this volume, each illustrator shares a favorite picture of a cat and then makes some observations about cats. Some are hilarious, some are thoughtful, and some are insightful. All are different. Students can use this volume to see how many different voices can write about a similar topic. Anthologies are a favorite way to show a variety of voices on a similar topic. (If you are a dog lover, there is a similar volume on dogs, too.)

Rosenberg, Liz. *The Carousel.* Harcourt Brace, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-200853-5.

It's the magic of carousel horses coming to life which leads the two sisters in the story to the realization of the lasting gift of their mother's love. This fantasy story is a charmer. The message is one of courage and adventure, but the entire story with its glorious illustrations, speaks directly to the reader's imagination while capturing the heart.

Ryder, Joanne. *Earthdance.* Henry Holt, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-8050-2678-9.

"Imagine you are the Earth. Feel yourself growing taller than the trees, larger than the moon. Imagine you are twirling, dancing through space. You are covered with woods and seas, roads and villages, small creatures and laughing children. Imagine you are home to everyone and everything, the precious place we all know and love best." This poetic book (featured in the *Seeing with New Eyes* video) cries out for dance and movement. Its sensory approach to helping students explore a topic in many different "voices" is environmentally sensitive and a celebration of the planet earth.

Rylant, Cynthia. ***An Angel for Solomon Singer.*** **Orchard Books, 1992. Hardcover: ISBN 0-531-05978-2.**

One night, Solomon Singer, a mysterious, homeless wanderer and dreamer of things he cannot ever have, finds a small restaurant where—as the menu says—all your dreams come true. "That night, Solomon's face is reflected in a spoon and a waiter's voice, 'quiet like Indiana pines in November,' welcomes him to the Westway Cafe. The waiter's name is Angel." A terrific addition to a set of materials on place, home, or issues relating to the homeless. It is also a good stand-alone piece which invites several plausible interpretations. I think Cynthia Rylant has a great gift of finding important issues and sharing them in a way that allows us to grow and expand our thinking as we ponder them together and apart.

San Souci, Robert D. ***Kate Shelley: Bound for Legend.*** **Dial Books, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-8037-1290-1.**

This true story of Kate Shelley, recreates a heroic rescue resulting from a storm and a dreadful train wreck in Iowa in the summer of 1881—from the perspective of the young woman herself. I love this piece because we have so few historical pieces written from a woman's perspective, especially pieces that young as well as older children can read and enjoy.

Scieszka, Jon. ***The Frog Prince, Continued.*** **Viking Press, 1991. Hardcover: ISBN 0-670-83421-1.**

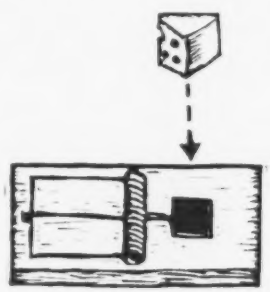
You may *think* you know the story of the Frog Prince, but you'll have to read on to find out the shocking truth about life "Happily ever after." In much the same voice as *The Paper Bag Princess*, this tale takes unpredictable twists and turns on its way to the true meaning of love and happiness. This is a long way from the Brothers Grimm!

Scieszka, Jon. *Math Curse.* Viking Press, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-670-86194-4.

The minute this book hit the shelves it was prized by teachers and kids alike. At every workshop people say, "Oh–I have that. Isn't it the greatest?" If, by some remote chance, you haven't seen this clever and typically original Scieszka book, run to your nearest library. If you've ever suffered from math anxiety, you'll relate immediately. If you've ever struggled to help kids understand how they use the things they learn in everyday life, you'll love it. If you just want to be amazed by someone's original ideas and incredible imagination, read it with pleasure and delight.

Scieszka, Jon & Lane Smith. *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales.* Penguin, 1992. Hardcover: ISBN 0-670-84487-X.

Get ready for a ride. Scieszka wags his irreverent tongue from cover to cover in this delightful romp through some once-familiar fairy tales. From the "Really Ugly Duckling" to "Jack's Bean Problem," students will be thoroughly entertained. Older students will appreciate the sarcasm and black humor. Students of all ages will find themselves inspired to put their personal stamp on familiar tales.



Sendak, Maurice. *We Are All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy.* HarperCollins, 1993. Hardcover: ISBN 0-06-205014-1.

Based on two nursery rhymes, this provocative picture book confronts the issue of homeless children. The illustrations draw you into the text while carefully weaving powerful messages about despair, poverty, richness, and excess into the reader's mind. An excellent example of voice with conviction achieved through very few words.

Shimmel, Schim. ***Dear Children of the Earth.*** **NorthWord Press, Inc., 1994. Hardback: ISBN 1-55971-225-2.**

The first thing to catch your eye will be the surrealistic paintings of the earth, it's creatures and its beauty. The second will be the poignant words which cry out for our children to learn about the beauty of the earth, how fragile she is, and how they will, one day very soon, become her caretakers. Written in letter format from the Earth to the Children, this piece is a powerful example of a topic that students have passion about and a great place for a writing assignment as they create thoughtful, information-packed responses.

Thaler, Mike. ***The Teacher from the Black Lagoon.*** **Scholastic, 1989. Paperback: ISBN 0-590-41962-5.**

Who will get a bigger charge out of this book—kids or teachers? Mike Thaler knows well what lurks deep in the hearts of kids and teachers as he capitalizes on the nervous excitement and fear that come with meeting your teacher on the first day of school. Characters of the absurd strike a chord with adults and children alike as Mrs. Green wreaks chaos and mayhem with her young students in the classroom. Gross and wildly exaggerated, this book is an all-time favorite. This is one time we don't seem to mind the "and I woke up and it was only a dream" ending. Ask students what kind of voice this writer is using and why it is so effective. Ask them under what circumstances they would use this kind of voice, and what the hallmarks are of doing it well. (*Principal from the Black Lagoon* also available.)

Vieira, Linda. ***The Ever-Living Tree: Life and Times of a Coast Redwood.*** **Walker, 1994. Paperback: ISBN 0-8027-7477-6.**

A workshop participant recommended this piece to me. He said he used it with his students to show how detailed information can be written in an interesting way that moves the reader through the text. There's a tremendous amount of information about the life cycle of the redwood tree in this text, but it is brought to life through thoughtfully written sections and always, always with the reader in mind. I'd use this book as a contrast to the bleak vagueness of the original and now infamous "Redwoods" piece from the six-trait workshop. This comparison could motivate students to investigate topics of their own and then write about them with the energy and authenticity modeled in this picture book.

Vos Wezeman, Phyllis. *Benjamin Brody's Backyard Bag.* Brethren Press, 1991. Hardcover: ISBN 0-87178-091-7.

Another in the collection of stories dealing with the homeless. Different in its approach from *Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting, or *We Are All In The Dumps with Jack and Guy* by Maurice Sendak, or *Seeing Eye Willie* by Dale Gottlieb. This story carefully develops the theme of "home" as it explores the thoughtful, practical, and very realistic point of view of young Benjamin Brody.

Yolen, Jane. *Sleeping Ugly.* Coward-McCann, 1981. Paperback: ISBN 0-698-20617-7.

When selfish Princess Miserella—beautiful on the surface only—meets the charming and modest Plain Jane—beautiful inside, where-it-counts—major changes rattle the timbers of the proverbial little house in the woods (where the floors are sinking and the walls are stinking). In this nontraditional fairy tale, you'll also encounter a prince who requires a bit of coaching before he can make the right princely choices, and an old fairy godmother with enough chutzpah to give the Miserellas of the world the comeuppance they so richly deserve.

Passion is to picture books as yeast is to bread: one is nothing without the other. . . . Writing without passion is writing for oblivion.

—Mem Fox

Dear Mem Fox, I have Read All Your Books Even the Pathetic Ones

Books that illustrate strong

Word Choice

Deliciously used everyday words
Word smithery & word pictures
Precision and growth with language

Adoff, Arnold. *Sports Pages.* Harper and Row, 1986. Paperback: ISBN 0-06-446098-3.

Do you have students who love sports but can't see poetry for dust? Turn them on to a new way of thinking with this wonderful book in which those two worlds meet. Rhythmic and musical, yet also enlivened with the authentic language of the sports world, this gem of a book superbly captures the poetry of playing hard and well. (NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children.) Pssst . . . wonderful for sentence fluency, too.

Baker, Keith. *The Magic Fan.* Voyager (Harcourt Brace), 1989. Paperback: ISBN 0-15-200983-3.

Written to inspire imagination in all ages, this Japanese folk tale tells the story of Yoshi who builds a boat to catch the moon, a kite to catch the clouds, and a bridge to save the village from a powerful Tsunami. The language is poetic and yet clearly conveys the tone and voice of the piece. Powerful verbs, precise nouns . . . Baker is a writer who knows how to use language well. See also (for younger readers) *Who is the Beast?*, by the same author. A special thank you to sharp-eyed Gaye Lantz of Tacoma, Washington for spotting this author's fine works and sharing them with all of us.

Base, Graeme. *My Grandma Lived in Gooligulch.* Abrams, 1983. **Hardcover: ISBN 0-8109-1547-2.**

Here's a terrific tale in rollicking verse and marvelously detailed illustrations from one of the best, Australian author Graeme Base. Invite students to enjoy this story by pulling out unfamiliar words (bullabong, galahs, kookaburras, wombat, etc.) from the text to see if they can figure out what these intriguing words mean. Reread this story aloud several times and ask if the words and images have changed in any way since the first reading.

Burdett, Lois. *A Midsummer Night's Dream for Kids,* Firefly Books, 1997. **Paperback: ISBN 1-55209-124-4.**

This book from world-class teacher and author Lois Burdett, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* just keeps on amazing and astounding. (Find her other books listed under the trait of ideas.) The quality of the writing and the "wordsmithery" done by her seven- and eight-year-olds is truly remarkable. Listen to this example: "Puck had made a dredful BOO-BOO! He put the love juice into Lysander's eyes. Heleaa came blubering by with a pudel of tear behind her. Lysander saw Helena and fell in love. Hermia is left with a crack up heart! That makes confewshun!" This piece, along with her others, makes wonderful examples to show students at all ages how the traits of word choice and voice work so well together.

Clements, Andrew. *Double Trouble in Walla Walla.* Millbrook Press, 1997. **Hardcover: ISBN 0-7613-0275-1.**

Everything was tip-top in Walla Walla until it became a big mish-mash. When LuLu raised her hand in class and her teacher called on her, an onslaught of flip-flop chit-chat began. And it was contagious! So much so they had to trit-trot down to the principal's office to see what all the hub-bub was about. Mrs. Bell, the teacher explained, "LuLu's been trying to razzle-dazzle me with some kind of lippity-loppity jibber-jabber, and now I'm all helter-skelter myself." And so the story unfolds until the teacher, principals, and Lulu come up with a VERY unusual cure. Eeeka-freaka! It's really DOUBLE TROUBLE IN WALLA WALLA!

Fox, Mem. *Feathers and Fools.* Harcourt Brace, 1996.
Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-200473-4.

I haven't found a book that has grabbed hold of my heart and mind as much as this masterpiece by Mem Fox. The language is sophisticated and eloquent. Passages such as "Again the first peacock spoke. 'How strange that swans should fly. It is happy indeed that we do not, for we should surely look ridiculous.' The other peacocks pecked and strutted again, contemplating the meaning of this second observation." This piece was written in 1989 but illustrated in 1996. It was worth the wait, Mem. As always, you are true to your belief that children need words and images in their minds before they can express themselves clearly. Once again you honor them with a piece that will fill their heads with pictures, words, and ideas. The message couldn't be more timely or brought home more clearly with the perfect marriage of text and pictures. A third, fourth, and fifth reading only serves to underscore its truth. Like the peacocks and swans in this story, we humans are quick to use our differences as a source of distrust that has led not only to wars, but also to the ongoing struggle for peace in neighborhoods, cities, and regions around the world. This book would be well-paired with *Smoky Nights* and/or *Pink and Say*.

Fox, Mem. *Possum Magic.* Voyager (Harcourt Brace), 1983. Paperback: **ISBN 0-15-263224-7.**

Another Mem Fox favorite. At times using rhyme and gentle alliteration to create pictures in our minds, this simple story charms us with words and phrases we love and remember. "It was there, in the far north of Australia, that they found a Vegemite sandwich. Grandma Poss crossed her claws and crossed her feet. Hush breathed deeply and began to eat. 'A tail! A tail!' shouted both possums at once. For there it was. A brand new, visible tail." A good choice for sentence fluency, too, with engaging rhythm achieved through sentence variety and well-placed fragments.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Garland, Sherry. *The Lotus Seed.* Harcourt Brace, 1993. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-249465-0.

Do you believe that simple words are often best? If so, you will not want to miss this powerhouse tale of love, fear, loss, and hope. A young Vietnamese girl emigrates from a homeland torn apart by war, with only a lotus seed to remind her of the traditions and memories left so far behind. Years later, a young child, not knowing the significance of the lotus flower, takes the seed, then loses it. See how much this family discovers as they search for a tiny seed that symbolizes more to them than anyone had realized. This is a story beautifully told. Its simple yet well-conceived plot makes it an excellent example of organization as well.

Harshman, Marc. *The Storm.* Cobblehill Books (Dutton), 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-525-65150-0.

Listen to this section from an amazing work which could be used in EVERY trait: "Jonathan looked again at the sky. And there he saw it, saw the strange, black thumb press itself down out of the bulging mass of clouds and stretch into a narrow tongue just licking over the surface of the ground. Tornado!" *The Storm* is all about tornadoes, but even more, it is about a young man's struggle to be seen as himself, not as "the boy in the wheelchair." The adventure of *The Storm* provides Jonathan an opportunity to do more than he ever realized he could, and to help others see him as the person he is becoming. Nicely written and speaks to us all. I think you'll like this one!

Heller, Ruth. *Many Luscious Lollipops.* Grosset & Dunlap, 1989. Paperback: ISBN 0-448-40136-1.

Buy it for the illustrations alone, and enjoy this painless tour through the world of adjectives. This is one of a series by Heller, which includes books specializing in verbs, nouns, and adverbs. Captivating and creative, with a style all its own.

Joosse, Barbara M. *I Love You the Purplest.* Chronicle Books, 1996.
Hardcover: ISBN: 0-8118-0718-5.

A wise mother indeed knows the not-so-subtle traps her children lay for her in an attempt to reinforce how much they are loved. The two boys in this story are no exception. "Who do you love most, Mom?" is the refrain echoed over and over in this book in different contexts. During a summer fishing trip, the mother artfully finds the right words to point out the wonderful qualities each child possesses—never putting one above the other, but always finding a way to make each feel special. "Julian, I love you the bluest. I love you the color of a dragon fly at the tip of the wind . . . and Max, I love you the reddest. I love you the color of the sky before it blazes into night . . ." A tender, delightful, and heartwarming book. If I could only take two books with me to a workshop (yeah, right—like THAT is ever going to happen) this would be one of them. The other? *Hoops*, by Robert Burleigh. Well, then of course I couldn't live without my Mem Fox books either . . .

Krull, Kathleen. *Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman.* Harcourt Brace, 1996.
Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-2012267-2.

Born and raised in Clarksville, Tennessee, Wilma loved to run and play until she became very ill and diagnosed with polio which left her unable to walk. She never gave up trying, however, and even after doctors said it was impossible, she walked on her own and eventually won three gold Olympic medals. This is a book of inspiration and sheer human tenacity. Coupled with David Diaz's (*Smoky Nights*) illustrations, I felt the anguish and struggle of Wilma's life and celebrated right along with her as she triumphed. The author's style adds drama and flair to this biography and helps you to personalize Wilma's experiences to those of your own.

Lewis, Paul Owen. *Storm Boy.* Beyond Words, 1995.
Hardcover: ISBN 1-885223-12-9.
Wow . . . the artwork alone from the rugged Northwest coast and its native Haida, Tingit, and other Native American tribal people make this a stand-alone work. Beyond that, however, is a story with precise historical detail and a sense of mystery. It reads like poetry, and deepens one's understanding and appreciation for the beauty of the Native American traditions.

Lounsbury, Charles. *Pictures in the Fire.* Blue Lantern Books, 1993.
Hardcover: ISBN 9-9621131-9-0.
I believe this book is true. I know, I know, it could all be created by the publisher, but deep in my heart, I want to believe someone was good enough to know that the true riches of the world lie less in how much we have when we die than the way we leave the world at the end of our time here. Mr. Lounsbury's last will and testament "found" by the publisher and legally probated by the Chicago Bar Association leaves the world all the good things by reminding us of what they are. His special emphasis on the beauty and love of children is poignant and moving. The words, though a bit archaic for our time, speak clearly and eloquently. I dare you to read this and not want to believe it is true. (Thank you Darle! I really love this book.)

Maruki, Toshi. *Hiroshima No Pika.* Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1980.
Hardcover: ISBN 0-688-01297-3.
This simple, yet elegant and moving text describes the events of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. The specific use of language and carefully designed flow of the text underscore the monumental series of events as they unfolded that fateful day at Hiroshima. The illustrations build in intensity from page to page until the enormity of the event becomes part of your very soul. An important book which received numerous honors including the prestigious Boston Globe/Horn Book Award.

Monceaux, Morgan. *Jazz. My Music, My People.* Random House, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 0-679-85618-8.

An inspired combination of bold, eye-catching paintings, reflective memories, and biographies of some of the world's great jazz artists and history makers. Artists like W.C. Handy, Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, Louis Armstrong, Dizzie Gillespie, Nat King Cole, Sarah Vaughn, Lena Horne, Pearl Bailey, and many others come to life on pages that celebrate their extraordinary talent. This marvelous behind-the-scenes look at the world of jazz opens with a foreword by Wynton Marsalis highlighting *The Legend of Buddy Bolden*: "So confidently did Bolden's sound shout out against the gumbo-thick New Orleans sky that people way across the Mississippi River in Algiers could clearly hear that it was time to swing with a happiness that infected all within earshot." You'll swing with happiness too as you encounter masterfully crafted phrasing and wonderfully choice detail on every page.

Musgrove, Margaret. *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions.* Dial Books, 1977. Paperback: ISBN 0-8037-0308-2.

A beautifully illustrated alphabet book, one you'll savor for its original text and even more for the exceptional pictures. A glorious celebration of African traditions. "The Dillons' paintings are breathtaking recreations of tribal life, authentic in detail and spirit as well. The tribes are arranged alphabetically, making this an advanced ABC book as well . . . . Carefully researched and skillfully executed." *Chicago Sun Times* (Caldecott Medal winner.)

Oppenheim, Joanne. *Have You Seen Trees?* Scholastic, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-590-46691-7.

A descriptive piece about the moods, feelings, sights, and sounds of trees and their leaves through all the seasons. "Dry leaves, brown leaves, covering-the ground leaves. Make-a-crunching-sound leaves, dropping-everywhere leaves, left-the-trees-bare leaves. I can hear the crunch of the crisp dry leaves!" Now that I see it in print, this would be a good book to share about creative use of conventions, too. This book is a great descriptive writing prompt. See what your kids can do with the sights and sounds of the seasons after they hear this author's ideas.

Raschka, Chris. *Yo! Yes?* Orchard Books, 1993. Hardcover: ISBN 0-531-05469-1.

Two boys meet on the street and through the simplest of dialogue, "Yo!" "Yes?" explore the tentative beginnings of a friendship. In this Caldecott Honor picture book, everyday words convey a multitude of meanings through inflection, placement, and presentation. Students may wish to explore other pairings of words in stories of their own.

Robbins, Ken. *Earth: The Elements.* Henry Holt, 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-8050-2294-5.

A simple and beautiful book of geological elements that makes you want to drop everything and run to the nearest igneous rock just to check it out. Visually stunning photographs coupled with eloquent expository prose. Similar to its sister book, *Water:* "An elegant change from the more 'efficiently' written and illustrated science books . . . The pictures are a cool drink in an often arid genre." —Bulletin for the Center of Children's Books.

Rylant, Cynthia. *Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds.* Harcourt Brace, 1991. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-201605.

Even if you've never been to Appalachia, this exquisite volume creates the moods, sounds, and feel of the region. It invites you to explore the beauty of the countryside, the simple majesty of the people. The prose and illustrations help you to imagine life and traditions in Appalachia; the words are straight from the heart and chosen to bring this special place to life. If you are collecting books on the theme of place, then don't forget this one. (The recipient of many, many awards and celebrations including the Parent's Choice Award.)

Rylant, Cynthia. *The Dreamer.* Blue Sky Press (Scholastic), 1993. Hardcover: ISBN 0-590-47341-7.

Perhaps the book jacket says it best, "This is the story of one who dreamed the world." It's a creation story that wraps us all in its warm and simple elegance. Phrases like "Green grass. He painted soft, sweet-smelling green grass—as young artists will almost always do—he got carried away and painted some trees." Coupled with Barry Moser's award-winning watercolors, this book is a treasure.

Rylant, Cynthia. *The Old Woman Who Named Things.* Harcourt Brace, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-257809-9.

How important is just the right name, anyway? Ask the old lady in this delightful story who has outlived all her friends and now only names things in life she knows she can never outlive: her house Franklin, her bed Roxanne, and Bud, the ceramic pig out in her garden. But what to do about the stray dog that faithfully shows up at her garden gate every day? If she doesn't name it, then she doesn't have to worry about outliving it, right? But, as you can imagine, that resolve doesn't last long and the conclusion is a warm and thoughtful treatment of a charming old lady's decision to keep and name the stray who has come into her life. Students would have a lot of fun writing their own stories and naming the important inanimate objects in their lives, too. The stories behind the names will tell a lot!

Soto, Gary. *The Old Man and His Door.* Putnam, 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-399-22700-8.

Another gift from one of the most prominent voices in Latino-American literature for young people, this delightful story uses English and Spanish to tell its tale. An old man who is very good at working in his garden but terrible at listening to his wife is asked to go get "el puerco," the pig. But instead, the old man gets very distracted and brings back "la puerta," the door. The adventure is charming and funny and all turns out well—even better than anyone could have expected. Sprinkled with Spanish words throughout, a Spanish to English glossary is provided right at the front of the story. Wouldn't this be a great idea for students in your class to try and imitate? Help them think up pairs of words that sound very much alike but mean something quite different. Then encourage them to create stories that show how important it is to listen well so the meaning of the words doesn't cause confusion as it did in *The Old Man and his Door.* The stories could be like this one, which uses Spanish and English, or they could use other languages as well.

Steig, William. *Amos and Boris.* Puffin Books, 1977. Paperback: ISBN 0-14-050229-7.

They're not the likeliest of friends: Amos, a tiny mouse with an adventuring spirit as large as the world that beckons him, and Boris, a gigantic but gentle whale with an abundant curiosity about life on land. They meet through a series of misadventures—not just once, but twice in their lives; and through their chance meetings forge a bond of friendship no time or circumstance can undo. This is an inspiring story of courage, friendship, and trust, rich with the lyrical language of which Steig is the undeniable master: "Boris admired the delicacy, the quivering daintiness, the light touch, the small voice, the gemlike radiance of the mouse. Amos admired the bulk, the grandeur, the power, the purpose, the rich voice, and the abounding friendliness of the whale." Wonderful as it is for word choice, you'll want to use this delightful picture book for ideas, organization, sentence fluency, and voice as well.

Steig, William. *Brave Irene.* Sunburst Books (Michael di Capua Books/Farrar, Straus & Giroux), 1988. Paperback: ISBN 374-40927-70370.

"She pounced and took hold, but the ill-tempered wind ripped the box open. The ball gown flounced out and went waltzing through the powdered air with tissue paper attendants." So goes the adventure of the determined, not-to-be-thwarted Irene, who braves wind, cold, and snow to deliver her mother's painstakingly sewn masterpiece gown to the duchess in time for the castle holiday ball. Glorious verbs, vibrant images—all the wonders of word choice we've come to expect from the word wizard himself.

Steig, William. *Caleb and Kate.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977. Paperback: ISBN 374-41038-00370.

How do you explain to your wife, with whom you've just quarreled, that while you were stomping about in the woods trying to gain your composure, a mischievous witch transformed you into a loving, companionable dog? "Caleb went crashing into the forest by their house, pondering why he had married such a cantankerous hoddy-doddy; but after he'd walked a while, his fury faded and he couldn't remember what it was they had quarreled about." Cantankerous hoddy-doddy? You have to love such out-of-the-ordinary language—colorful, bright, witty, and vivid. This book is as satisfying as a cup of hot cocoa by the fire on a rainy day.

Steig, William. ***Shrek!*** **Sunburst Books, 1990. Paperback: ISBN 0-374-46623-8.**

"A mischievous, topsy-turvy chronicle of nasty ogre's wonder years."—*Parenting.* This book, like all of William Steig's work, exemplifies the degree of sophistication an author can achieve by precise word choice. Never talking down to students, William Steig delights and amazes the reader with his visual pictures, his clever phrasing and vivid descriptions. Read this one aloud—it's a hoot!

Steig, William. ***Solomon: The Rusty Nail.*** **Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1985. Hardcover: ISBN 374-37131-8.**

Solomon is smarter than the average rabbit; in fact, this crafty little character can transform himself into a rusty nail whenever he wants. Great fun till he's discovered by the unscrupulous cat Ambrose and his wife Clorinda. A deadly dilemma ensues: Should Solomon remain safely in his rusty nail state—indefinitely? Or return to life as a rabbit and risk being turned into Hasenpfeffer? Have some fun working through this sticky problem with the ingeniously resourceful Solomon. A book with personality—like all of Steig's work.

Walker, Alice. ***To Hell With Dying.*** **Voyager (Harcourt Brace), 1988. Paperback: ISBN 0-15-289074-2.**

All of should have a Mr. Sweet in our lives. In this compelling piece, the main character interacts with an elderly man who often has very bad spells and fears for his life. The family encourages him to hang on, as the father says, "To hell with dying. These children need Mr. Sweet." And slowly, their love and need for him bring Mr. Sweet back to health. Although this continues to be the cycle of life for Mr. Sweet and his friends, many years later, as the main character leaves home for school, there comes the inevitable day when Mr. Sweet does not rise from his sickbed. "He was like a piece of rare and delicate china which was always being saved from breaking and which finally fell." This piece deals with the significance of life and death and the legacy of those who are most significant in our lives. Magnificently written . . . well, what else would you expect from Alice Walker?

Young, Ed. *Voices of the Heart.* Scholastic, 1997. Hardcover: ISBN 0-590-50199-2.

Based on 26 Chinese characters, each describing a feeling, this richly illustrated text uses layers of meaning to discover the depth of emotion behind each symbol. This would be a fine piece to use to discuss values and ethics in different cultures. The art in this book is thoughtful and striking. The text creates harmony with the words and pictures and invites readers to explore a full range of emotions about the very words that try to describe the depth of our feelings.

No longer just a first stage toward serious reading, the picture book is now enhancing math concepts, history lessons, art projects, science experiments, human relations development, and of course, the language arts program. Creative teachers have found ways to use picture books in all grade levels and in all subject areas.

—Susan Hall

Using Picture Storybooks to Teach Literary Devices: Volume Two

Books that illustrate strong

Sentence Fluency

Rhythm and cadence
Language with a beat
Variety & spice

Angelou, Maya. *My Painted House, My Friendly Chicken and Me.* Random House, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 0-517-59667-9.

Eight-year-old Thandi, narrator of this delightful tale, will touch your heart and awaken your sense of vocal rhythm as she leads you on a visual and verbal tour of her native village. Wonderfully original sentence patterns sing across the pages: "I wonder, are little brothers in your village as mischievous as my little brother?" A delightful blend of text and photographic illustration gives the book a kind of personal portfolio feel. Adults and children alike will enjoy the playfulness with font size and style that helps carry meaning in simple, yet effective ways. Like a good photo album, this book is a joy to read again and again.

Base, Graeme. *The Sign of the Seahorse.* Abrams, 1992. Hardcover: ISBN 0-8109-3825-1.

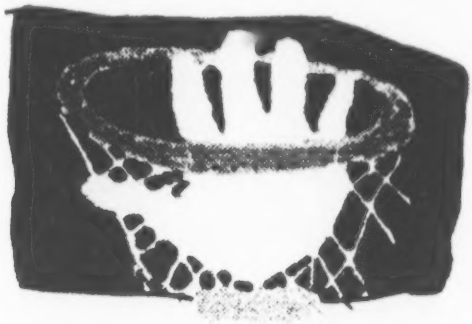
Adventure in and under the high seas brought to dramatic reality through the inimitable imagination and vision of Graeme Base (*Animalia, The Eleventh Hour*). You can spend hours just with the illustrations, then take another run through to enjoy the remarkable text. Wonderfully rhythmic, but equally appropriate for word choice and voice.

Baylor, Byrd. *The Table Where Rich People Sit.* Scribners, 1994.
Hardcover: ISBN 0-684-19653-0.

Mountain Girl knows the family isn't rich, but like many young people, she misses the goodies that a little extra cash can buy. So, she calls a family meeting at the homemade kitchen table to discuss her feelings about their lack of money and the "stuff" that goes with it. However, after she lays out her case, her parents begin to help her see and appreciate the many riches that they have–the feel of the wind, the smell of the rain, the sound of the coyotes, the sight of the eagles. Gradually, Mountain Girl comes to appreciate how very rich she is. As with all of Byrd Baylor's books, they are so beautifully written that the rhythm and cadence is almost poetic. Her words sing to you as the thoughts invade your own world and you find yourself sitting at the very same table taking note of all the things that make your life worth living.

Burleigh, Robert. *Hoops.* Silver Whistle (Harcourt Brace), 1997.
Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-201450-0.

How to describe this book and do it justice? Perhaps the first few lines say enough. "Hoops. The game. Feel it. The rough roundness. The ball like a piece of the thin long reach of your body. The way it answers whenever you call. The never-stop back and forth flow, like tides going in, going out." And so it begins, a book about how it FEELS to play basketball from the inside out. This book is a sensation. I have read it a dozen times and on each reading I fall more in love with the idea, the rhythm, and the use of the cadence of language to mirror the feel of the basketball and the game. Kids love it; adults love it; it should be in every teacher's collection. A 100 percent guaranteed hit!



Cisneros, Sandra. *Hairs ∂ Pelitos.* Apple Soup, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 0-679-86171-8.

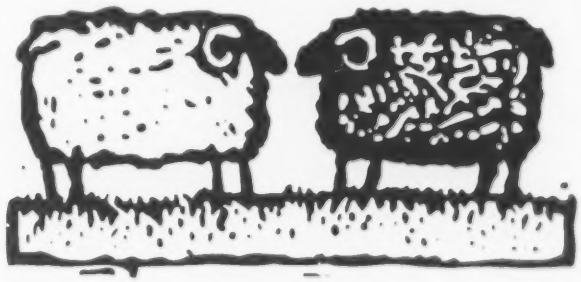
The House on Mango Street is a one of those books you keep buying and buying because each time you get a copy, you wind up giving it to someone else to enjoy. It's impossible not to share this engaging, lively, thoughtful, delicious, colorful, and exquisite collection of stories. Now comes the picture book of one of the chapters, "Hairs ∂ Pelitos," so even young children can have access to Sandra Cisneros' beautiful thoughts and language. Use the original text and picture book as complements, or treasure this illustrated piece from the original. But whatever you do, don't miss them. Really.

Dorros, Arthur. *Isla.* Dutton (Penguin), 1995. Hardback: ISBN 0-525-45149-8.

"Hay mucho mas que ver," Abuela says to her granddaughter Rosalba. Indeed, there are many more places to see and explore in this English text which is sprinkled with Spanish phrases. The two pick up their adventures from the earlier award winning story, *Abuela*, as they visit places like the rain forest, an old market, and the harbor. This is a loving story which honors family and culture.

Fox, Mem. *Time for Bed.* Harcourt Brace, 1993. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-288183-2.

A beautiful way to say goodnight, with tender passages that create a snuggly, content, end-of-the-day mood. The rhythm is gentle, but strong, and large print allows beginning readers to follow along. Just two lines to the page. Here's one to read aloud over and over. A fine book for illustrating how rhyme affects rhythm.



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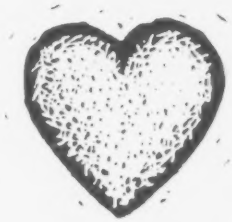
Fox, Mem. *Wombat Divine.* Harcourt Brace, 1995.
Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-201416-0.

This book cries out to be read aloud. Its phrasing is absolutely perfect to complement the story line. It would make a terrific group read piece, divided into parts, with the delightful line at the end, "You were divine, Wombat!" as the final crescendo. This story speaks to us all during those moments of wanting to fit in, but not knowing quite how. Wombat lives this experience as he tries to join in on the Nativity play. No part is quite right for him until finally, the group realizes he would be the perfect Baby Jesus. You'll love this simple, yet poetic piece. Mem, you've done it again!

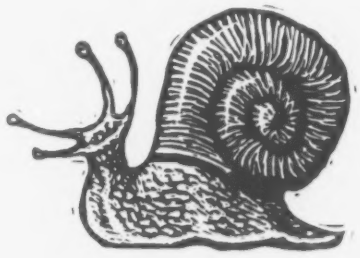
Gray, Libba More. *My Mama Had a Dancing Heart.* Orchard Books, 1995.
Hardcover: ISBN 0-531-09470-7.



The title alone on this one captured my attention. It is an indication of the lyrical text that follows in this delightful piece that celebrates the relationship of a mother and daughter who go through life living each moment and finding the joy in each season. Beautifully illustrated, each page is written like the lyrics of a song; a joyful ballet that is bursting with life and love.

Greenberg, David. *Slugs.* Joy Street Books, 1983. Paperback:
ISBN 0316-32659-3.

You don't have to be from the Oregon coast to enjoy this snappy story-poem about slugs. Kids of all ages will enjoy the mildly repulsive playfulness of Greenberg's prose. Notice how the sharp, succinct phrasing grows longer page by page until at the end it a-l-m-o-s-t stretches into complete sentences. (Good for word choice, too.)



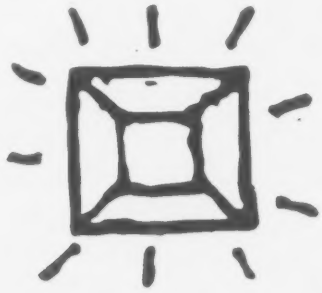
Herron, Carolivia. *Nappy Hair.* Knopf, 1997. Hardcover: ISBN 0-679-87937-4.

The inside jacket says it best: "While it seems that the family is poking fun at Brenda's hair, the nappiest, the curliest, the twistiest hair in the whole family, in fact they're admiring it by uncovering its meaning, its strength, its African-ness. The African American tradition of call-and-response makes *Nappy Hair* a story for many voices. As the dialogue builds, its spirit draws you in, rolls you around, and doesn't let you go. Finally, its blues rhythms slow down and let you off at the end." And this from a high school teacher in South Carolina:

> *"It is my opinion that using novels about Blacks or written by African American writers in classrooms will help clear up any misconceptions, stereotypes, and myths about African Americans. If teachers would use more multicultural books in their classrooms, it would enable children to understand and respect the diversity of other cultures. It is a must if we want the world to be a better place in which to live."*
>
> *—A Black Woman and Teacher.*

Lawrence, Jacob. *The Great Migration: An American Story.* HarperCollins, 1992. Hardcover: ISBN 0-06-023037-1

"To me, migration means movement. There was conflict and struggle. But out of the struggle came a kind of poetry and even beauty. 'And the migrants kept coming' is a refrain of triumph over adversity. If it rings true for you today, then it must still strike a chord in our American experience." This majestic work of 60 sequential paintings by the African American artist eloquently tells the story of the southern Black migration to the northern workplace and a new way of life in the 1920s. The fluency and movement from picture to picture underscore the theme of a culture in transition. Don't miss this book—it is thoughtful and powerful. (Also use for organization and voice.)

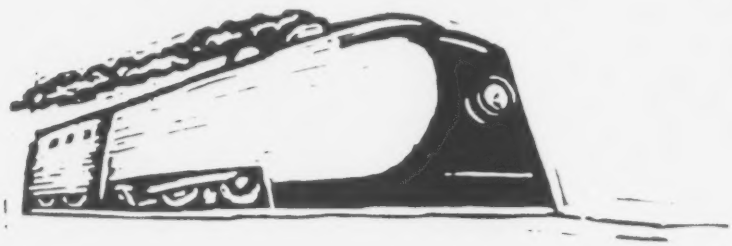


McLerran, Alice. *The Ghost Dance.* Clarion Books (Houghton Mifflin), 1995. Hardcover: ISBN 0-395-63168-8.

Whenever I pack for a workshop, I sort through all my picture books. Then, I re-sort, and finally go through them one last time, trying to create a balance between what I know teachers will love and what my back and luggage can withstand. This book will always make the cut—ALWAYS. Not only is the example included for a lesson on fluency, but I find it so moving that I get emotional every time I read it to myself or to a group of adults or kids. Its message of cultural harmony from the tradition of the Paiute Indians is beautifully told, but doesn't preach. It's so simple. We can learn from each other which allows us to move to a better place TOGETHER.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Harlem.* Scholastic, 1997. Hardcover: ISBN 0-590-54340-7.

A richly illustrated copy of Walter Dean Myers' glorious poem, this piece cries out to be read aloud. It's a chorus of rich sounds and life connections telling the tale of an important piece of American culture. "Come, take a journey on the 'A' train that started on the banks of the Niger and has not ended." Take the journey of *Harlem.*



Panzer, Nora, ed. *Celebrate America in Poetry and Art.* Hyperion Books in association with the National Museum of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 1-56282-664-6.

Beautiful scarcely begins to cover it. Within these pages lie some of the finest of American art and verse, and editor Nora Panzer has done a marvelous job of coordinating art with text to create a special sense of time, place, or mood on every page. This is a tour of America not to be missed. This fine book is incredible for fluency.

Paulsen, Gary. *Dogteam.* Delacorte Press, 1993. Hardcover: ISBN 0-385-30550-8.

Into the magic of a moonlit winter night, the dogs who love to run, the dogs Gary Paulsen knows so well, take their owner—and you, the reader—on a star-spangled journey "away from camp, away from people, away from houses and light and noise and into only one thing, into only winternight . . ." Live the magic, the speed, the thrill of running, the chilly encounter with wolves, the beauty of the night woods, and the warmth of coming home at the end of the run. A book that transports readers in time and place. Ruth Wright Paulsen's remarkable illustrations are so right for Gary Paulsen's text that the two seem to come from one mind and heart. Only a writer with a true love of the woods and dog sledding could have packed such power into his work. The text sings like blades along the snow. Is it prose or poetry? Does it matter? Either way, it will pull you into the blue world of winternight.

Paulsen, Gary. *Work Song.* Harcourt Brace, 1997. Hardcover: ISBN 0-15-200980-9.

Here's a real treasure. This nonfiction work from Gary Paulsen and his illustrator wife, Ruth Wright Paulsen, could be used in lots of ways. The text honors the many different jobs that we have in the world of work—interestingly juxtaposed one to the next through the pages. Along with illustrations that tend to obscure the male/female role (who can tell the gender of a person inside a diving suit or a welder's helmet, for instance), the text flows simply and beautifully from beginning to end. "It is keening noise and jolting sights, and hammers flashing in the light, and houses up and trees in sun, and trucks on one more nighttime run . . ." Can you feel it? I feel a sense of honor in this piece. It is good to work—with your hands or in an office—the WORK is good.

Say, Allen. *A River Dream.* Houghton Mifflin, 1988. Hardcover: ISBN 0-395-48294-1.

Allan Say has a magical touch. In this story he brings his love of nature and the environment into play while spinning his story web characterizing a young boy's journey toward maturity. His words are soft and gentle and the rhythm of the piece rocks you into a cradle of sweetness and gentility. The questions young Mark faces are universal; what is unique about Allan Say's writing is the honesty and sincerity that permeates each line, each carefully worded phrase.

Shange, Ntozake and Romare Bearden. *i live in music.* Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1994. Hardcover: ISBN 1-55670-372-4.

"Shange's lyrical poem is a tribute to the language of music and the magical, often mystical rhythms that connect people. Music defines who we are as individuals, the places where we live, and how we exist within our communities. Music is life." This poem has a syncopated style and melody all its own. Looking for a book to help students develop an ear for the rhythm and flow of words? This is it! As beautifully illustrated as it is written.

Siebert, Diane. *Heartland.* Thomas Y. Crowell, 1989. Hardcover: ISBN 0-690-04730-4.

For our many friends in the heartland, this piece, written in rhyming poetry, celebrates your beautiful countryside and way of life. The reader experiences the rich majesty of the Mid-west farmland—a land where nature rules everyday life and man has learned to live gracefully with her power.

Steig, Jeanne. *Consider the Lemming.* Sunburst, 1988. Paperback: ISBN 0-374-41361-4.

"All the appeal of Ogden Nash at his best. There are limericks here that may prove immortal."—*Kirkus Reviews.* All the whimsical fun of William Steig's illustrations combined with Jeanne Steig's wacky text. Unpredictable and zany, with insight and perspective to make you chuckle.

Viorst, Judith. *ALEXANDER Y EL DIA TERRIBLE, HORRIBLE, ESPANTOSO, HORROROSO.* Aladdin, 1972.
Paperback: ISBN 0-689-71350-9.
Kids and adults alike relate to the chain of horrible events chronicled in this classic story. For students learning English as a second language, the trait of fluency is one of the most difficult. Read this Spanish version, or whichever language version best suits your students' needs, and listen to the rhythm and flow of the text. In all languages, this piece just works!

Viorst, Judith. *If I Were in Charge of the World, and Other Worries.*
Aladdin Books, 1981. Paperback: ISBN 0-689-70770-3.
If you've ever had trouble apologizing or keeping a secret, had a crush or a broken heart, there's a poem here for you. Written with humor and understanding, Viorst's poems are certain to delight children and adults alike. As you read them, be aware of the cadence and rhythm that moves ideas along and delights the tongue! Students will enjoy adding their own personal reflections on life to this rich treasure of poetry.

Viorst, Judith. *My Mama Says There Aren't Any Zombies, Ghosts, Vampires, Creatures, Demons, Monsters, Fiends, Goblins, or Things.*
Aladdin Books, 1973. Paperback: ISBN 0-689-71204-9.
"How can Nick believe his mother's telling him there aren't any monsters when she forgets what his favorite flavor of ice cream is? Or when she makes him wear boots and it doesn't even rain? Well, sometimes Mamas DO make mistakes . . . but sometimes they don't." This story invites oral reading and page turning.

Willard, Nancy. *A Visit to William Blake's Inn: Poems for the Innocent and Experienced Travelers.* Harcourt Brace, 1981.
Paperback: ISBN 0-15-293822-2.

Inspired by the poems of William Blake, Nancy Willard has written a book of magical poems about life at an imaginary inn, run by none other than William Blake himself. The inn is staffed by two mighty dragons that brew and bake, two angels that wash and shake the featherbeds, and a rabbit who shows visitors to their rooms. The incredible illustrations reflect an appreciation and understanding of life in London 200 years ago. (Newbery Medal and Caldecott Honor award winner.)

Like fine poetry, children's picture books are meant to be seen *and* heard. Even adolescents like to be read to . . . . By reading aloud I not only let kids hear the richness of the language, but I invite adolescents to read them also.

—Linda Reif

Beyond Words: Picture Books for Older Readers and Writers

Conventions

Simple and complex editorial skill
Consistency and accuracy
Making reading simple and interesting

Maizels, Jennie and Kate Petty. *The Amazing Pop-Up Grammar Book.* Dutton (Penguin), 1996. Hardcover: ISBN 0-525-45580-9.

The title pretty much covers it—a POP-UP grammar book. How amazing! This is a delightful collection of little tips on nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, plurals, possessives, some punctuation practice, and finally, sentence tricks. Little flaps, pull-open windows, matching flaps, etc. fill this piece. When I put this book out at workshops, teachers pour over it and cry out in delighted surprise at the clever little grammar activities. In fact, they wore out one copy and I'm on my second one already. I bet your students will enjoy it just as much.

The students lean forward in their seats, all eyes on the reader and book. As the reader holds up the pictures, or walks around the room holding the pages toward them, they shift around in their chairs to get a better view. When the reader lowers her voice to a near whisper, they strain to hear every word. As they listen, they respond—sometimes with a thoughtful silence, sometimes even with tears. The book is thirty-two pages long, and its text is so brief it can be read in its entirety in about ten minutes . . . Elementary school? First grade, perhaps? No, this is a university class . . . good picture books can be enjoyed by people of all ages.

—Rudine Simms Bishop and Janet Hickman
Beyond Words: Picture Books for Older Readers and Writers

96

Teaching Lessons and Activities

The next section of the 1998 *Picture Book Bibliography* contains more than 40 new lessons to assist you in planning to integrate the six traits and picture books into your classroom curriculum. Thank you so very, very much to teachers from New Jersey to Washington, from South Carolina to California, for your many contributions and ideas. On the following pages, you'll find a full range of practical, ready-to-use ideas for classrooms K-14 and beyond, organized by trait. Perhaps you'll want to use the lessons exactly as they are described; or, even better, maybe you'll get an idea from one or more of the suggestions and come up with wonderful new ideas of your own.

You know how much writing is influenced by reading and vice versa. Here is a place for all of our students to get some real, hands-on experience with the power of the writing/reading connection. Enjoy!

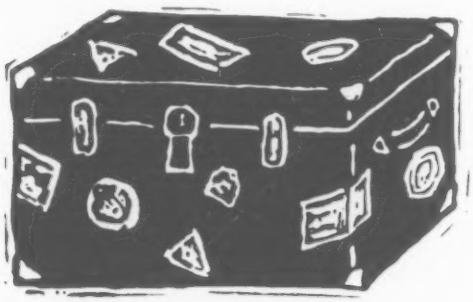
"Since I've started using picture books with my students, they really understand about clear ideas and the different ways they could be organized in their writing. And their voices . . . WOW! The models in the picture books have given my students courage to be writers themselves and the improvement in the quality of their work overall is absolutely amazing."

— a ninth grade teacher in Kent, Washington

USE PICTURE BOOKS TO TEACH THE TRAIT OF:

Ideas and Content

- Make a list of things to write about from ideas found in picture books
- Compare the way two authors write about the same idea
- Count the number of words in the average picture book and discuss how long it really takes to tell a story or explain an idea well
- List topics that seem too big, trite, or overused and look for ways authors of picture books have handled these topics well
- Select a topic from a content area class and create a picture book to teach someone else what has been learned
- Keep a writer's notebook of potential writing topics found in picture books



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Ideas Activity 1

Book: *Alphabet City*
by Stephen T. Johnson

Grades: All

Time Required: Varies: at least one to two hours recommended (the time can easily be broken into shorter segments if this is more convenient).

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Colored overhead transparencies of a few pages to share with the whole class to get a sample of the illustrator's use of graphic design
3) Drawing/painting/sketching materials for each student

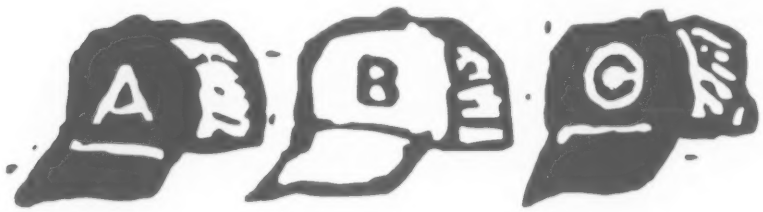
What to Do:

1) Share the book with students.
2) Discuss their reactions. What was the author trying to do with this text? Did she or he succeed? Which letters did they like best? Which did they find the most unusual? What different artistic treatments did they see represented?
3) Ask students to look around the room and describe any letter shapes they find. Which ones were easy? Which ones took a little more time to notice? Make a list, or draw pictures of what they discover.
4) Visit other places in the school—playground, cafeteria, gym, hallways, media center, main office, etc. As they find examples of letters, ask students to sketch the letters as close to the original as they can, paying close attention to their color, texture, location, and the context in which they were found.
5) Encourage students to look for other things, too, like numbers, letter combinations, etc. If you are able, take students out of the school environment to parks, museums, big streets, stores, etc. so they can expand their resources to find shapes and letters in their natural context.
6) If you have access to Polaroid cameras or several student-friendly cameras, take pictures of the letters and/or numbers as they are discovered. This way, the complete drawings or paintings can be done later.

7) Once students have a nice collection, return to the classroom or art room and decide whether they would like to make their own alphabet books, a display, or some other product from their research.
8) Display final work in the room, hallway, and other places around the school.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Ideas?

- Learning to observe carefully
- Looking beyond the obvious
- Noticing details someone else might not see
- Bringing your own interpretation to everyday objects



Ideas Activity 2

Book: *Whoever You Are*
by Mem Fox

Grades: Third and fourth

Time Required: 45-60 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Butcher paper
3) Markers

What to Do:

1) Discuss students' personal experiences with individuals they perceived as "different." Ask, "How or what did you feel?" Share an experience of your own.
2) Ask students to listen for Mem Fox's message as you read *Whoever You Are* aloud.
3) Discuss Mem Fox's message and brainstorm the ways in which we are all alike, whoever we are. Record on butcher paper.
4) Have students write a letter to a fellow student the same age, but in a different country. Ask them to share a similarity and a difference: looks, schools, home, country, etc. Remind them that for that student to "see" what they are sharing, they must include juicy details that show, not tell, so the pictures the reader sees will be clear. Ideal activity for pen-pal classrooms if other classroom does same activity. (Internet pen pals are available, too!)

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Ideas?

- For the similarities and differences to be clear to the audience, the authors must include details that create a clear picture thousands of miles away, around the world
- When students use specific "showing" details, it helps the reader understand the message of the piece

Ideas Activity 3

Book: *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox
To Hell With Dying by Alice Walker

Grades: Middle school on up

Time Required: One week or until you feel satisfied

Materials/Preparation:
A copy of both books

What to Do:
1) Read both books aloud.
2) Let students react to ideas in each book in notebooks and in small group discussion.
3) Ask questions: What kept your attention? What is really important about the topics? What did you gain as a reader?
4) After class discussion of how the ideas worked in each book, introduce the writing assignment.
5) Possible choices for writing assignment: 1) Compare and contrast the two themes from the two books, 2) Compare and contrast elderly life and young life.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Ideas?
- Picking two books that deal with the elderly provides an opportunity for students to see similar ideas written differently
- Contrasting authors' treatment of a similar theme can illustrate how to focus an idea, shape it, add details, and make it your own

Ideas Activity 4

Book: ***What You Know First***
by Patricia MacLachlan

Grades: Middle School

Time Required: Two 30-minute sessions or as teacher determines

Materials/Preparation:

1) Book
2) Paper and pencil
3) Three or four items of your own that remind you of your original home

What to Do:

1) Explain the proposed situation to the students. Situation: Your parents tell you that in a month you are moving to another state because of a great job for one or both of the parents. (Choose a state that would be opposite or would be a big change for the students, i.e., from Washington state to Arizona.)
2) Have the students make a quick list of things they would miss from their state.
3) Read the book aloud.
4) Show the students the items you brought that reminds you of your home/state and explain why you chose them.
5) Have the students generate a list of things they would take that would represent and help them remember something from their home that they would miss. Have them write an explanation of their favorite three items.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Ideas?

- This lesson helps students go from the general—moving—to the specific—what would you take?
- It also allows students to focus on linking specific individual items to larger ideas and themes
- In this type of activity, students learn that each piece of writing, though on the same or a similar topic, can turn out unique to the individual

Ideas Activity 5

Book: ***A Street Called Home***
by Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson

Grades: Fourth through eighth

Time Required: Two to three days

Materials/Preparation:

1) Book
2) Pencils and colored pencils
3) Crayons
4) Pens

What to Do:

1) Have a discussion about the people that make up your community, street, and neighborhood.
2) Direct the discussion to a more specific community—their school.
3) Read aloud different pages from the book.
4) Generate a list of people that make up your school community.
5) Assign each student to do a specific person in the school, i.e., principal, secretary, teachers, custodian, etc.
6) Provide the opportunity for students to research their person by conducting an interview. Set up interview appointments ahead of time.
7) Write interview questions and then write a general summary report about the person.
8) Draw a picture and write a description.
9) Put it all together in a book to have in the front office or out for open house.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Ideas?

- This book helps generate ideas about the things that make up the world around us: our community and home
- By focusing on one person from the school community, students concentrate their attention and add their own in-depth piece to the larger piece created by the group

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Ideas Activity 6

Book: ***The Old Woman Who Named Things***
by Cynthia Rylant

Grades: Third through 12th

Time Required: 60 minutes

Materials/Preparation:
1) A copy of the book
2) Paper
3) Pencil

What to Do:
1) Read the story aloud, but stop on page 5: "The old woman never worried about outliving any of them, and her days were happy."
2) Discuss other objects the old woman could name.
3) Have the students generate a list of items they own and have them give the objects names. Example: Bike, bed, shoes, dresser, computer, etc.
4) Have the students share their names and ask why they chose a particular name. Write a short explanation about the name they chose.
5) Have the students select the best ideas and then write stories about their objects and how they came to be named. (Can also be used for a Word Choice lesson.)
6) Have students share their stories.

Additional Activity 1:
1) Continue reading the story, but stop on the bottom of page 22 where it says, "Then he asked her what its name was."
2) Have the students generate a list of names for the dog and explain why those were their choices. Show the picture of the puppy to the students. Make a list of attributes the dog has or those that are common to most dogs.
3) Have the students pick one of the names and write a story about the dog, or continue the end of the story using the dog's name.

Additional Activity 2:

1) Show the students the picture on page 1 (woman standing on the porch looking outside), or page 10 (old woman sitting in the red chair).
2) Have the students write a description or story about this old woman. What does she see? What is she thinking? What has her life been like?

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Ideas?

- Using the idea of generating names like the old woman in the story gives the students a starting point for ideas
- The illustrations in this book are captivating and rich with expression which creates a starting point for ideas

Ideas Activity 7

Book: ***Amelia's Notebook***
by Marissa Moss

Grades: Third through eighth

Time Required: 60 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Journal/notebook for each student
3) Pencil, pens, crayons
4) Copies of a few pages of the journal on transparencies or an opaque projector to show students examples of the pictures.

What to Do:

1) Share book with students. In the discussion that follows, be sure to mention that a writer's notebook can be about anything. It can even include pictures or taped- or glued-in items.
2) Make a colored transparency of the first page of *Amelia's Notebook*.
3) Have the students design the cover page for their personal writing notebook.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Ideas?

- This book is a good example of a conglomeration of ideas. It shows students that a journal can be a fun way to record pictures and thoughts, and a way to write down ideas which can be the starting point for other stories or writing topics
- See *A Writer's Notebook* by Ralph Fletcher for more ideas and connections to the trait of ideas

Ideas Activity 8

Book: ***My Mama Had a Dancing Heart***
by Libba Moore Gray

Grades: Fourth through eighth

Time Required: 60 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) Paper
2) Pencils, crayons, colored pencils
3) Glue and scissors

What to Do:

1) After reading and discussing the book, think of other special things you do with your family that make time stand still with a precious moment.
2) Life is a celebration—brainstorm all the possible things we can do to celebrate things in life. Every day one should find one thing to illustrate and write about that has been a celebration in their life.
3) Do one activity from the book in class. Let children enjoy and experience the activity and then write about it using descriptive words.
4) Link this book with *Celebrations* by Byrd Baylor and compare/contrast the books and their messages.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Ideas?

- Students help find everyday moments to celebrate
- Students notice the things that make us happy—big and small

Ideas Activity 9

Book: ***The Table Where Rich People Sit***
by Byrd Baylor

Grades: Fourth through eighth

Time Required: 20 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Other book or books with related themes, for example, *The Keeping Quilt*
3) Paper

What to Do:

1) Discuss what was important to this family. Discuss the importance of the family table.
2) Have students bring in one object that is a favorite "treasure" to them. (Teacher may share a treasure of his or hers too!).
3) Have students draw a picture of a favorite activity their family does together and describe it.
4) Have students draw a place in their home where their families are most often together.
5) Share all these different special places.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Ideas?

- Exploring personal experiences as a source of ideas
- Connecting their lives to examples from literature
- Working with details on a focused topic

Ideas Activity 10

Book: *Alphabet City*
by Stephen T. Johnson

Grades: Kindergarten through eighth

Time Required: 30 minutes

Materials/Preparation:
A copy of the book

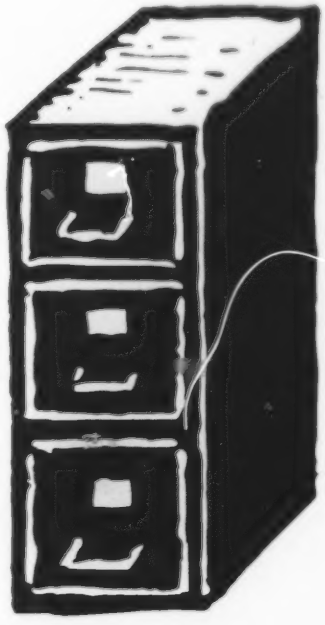
What to Do:
1) Show book out of order, just a few pages, and ask students what they see.
2) As discussion begins and letters are noticed, discuss how the illustrator took an ordinary, everyday object and found something unique/extraordinary about it.
3) Show book from beginning to end, continue discussion.
4) Look around the classroom for letters/shapes within the ordinary surroundings.
5) Take a walk outside and around the school looking for letters/shapes.
6) Create a bulletin board of their own from letters, numbers, etc. found nearby or in the school.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Ideas?
- Noticing little things others might not notice
- Looking at things from a different perspective

USE PICTURE BOOKS TO TEACH THE TRAIT OF:

Organization

- Write the story to a wordless picture book and highlight the lead, transitional words, sequence patterns, and conclusion
- Create a set of the best openings found in picture books
- Create a set of the best conclusions found in picture books
- Write a student-friendly set of guidelines for writing good openings and conclusions, based on what you find in picture books
- Write a new ending to one or more picture books
- Write a new picture book using the A to Z format on a topic from the current curriculum
- Read and discuss the different organizational structures found in a sampling of books



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Organization Activity 1

Book: *Zoom* and/or *ReZoom*
by Ivan Banyai

Grades: All

Time Required: 30-45 minutes (or this could go on for days and days because it gets addictive!)

Materials/Preparation:

Two original copies of either book(s). Tear the pages out of one and laminate them. (Keep the other copy intact as an original to use at the end of this sorting activity.) Mix up all the laminated pictures so they are no longer in the original order.

What to Do:

1) Tell students that they are to work as one large group (if you have one set of individual pages to the book) or smaller groups if you have several sets, and put the pages back in their original order.
2) Suggest the best way to do this will probably be to lay them all out so they can see the whole range before they try to sort.
3) Ask students to keep track of the kind of things that are influencing their decisions . . . color, format, layout, size, etc.
4) When students have finished sorting, discuss why they made the decisions they did. Ask why they picked some pictures for the beginning, and why they picked others for the ending. Ask them to explain the transitions they noticed in the middle—were some pictures used as a bridge to another sequence?
5) Discuss with students the similarities between the way they ordered the pictures and the way they would organize a piece of writing. This is a good time to reinforce the notion of a good beginning that draws you in, a sense of resolution at the end that leaves you thinking, and the transitions that link ideas in the middle and move you through the text.

6) Ask students to hold up the pictures that they think were good transition pieces in the middle. Now ask them if there is anything in written composition that resembles what this artist has done to move us along through the sequence of drawings (hint: lead sentences in paragraphs). Discuss how important this is to strong organization in writing.
7) Try this with other wordless picture books. (See the bibliography under Organization for other titles, or go browse in the bookstore. There are lots and lots that may really catch your eye!)

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Organization?

- Figuring out where the beginning is and how to get the reader/viewer's attention
- Putting things in logical order—sequencing
- Deciding where the end is and how to clearly wrap it all up
- Observing the "flow" of a piece that is well-organized and applying those techniques to their own writing or other original works

Organization Activity 2

Book: *The Frog Princess?*
by Pamela Mann

Grades: Fourth through eighth

Time Required: 30-60 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Other examples of children's fairy tales (see partial list at the end of this lesson).

What to Do:

1) Share with the students one of your favorite fairy tales, but talk about what it would be like if the ending was different and unexpected. For example, what if Cinderella stayed with the prince after midnight and didn't care about being in rags, or what if she really berated him about being superficial, or how would the story be different if the prince actually married one of the stepsisters?
2) Read *The Frog Princess?* aloud. Discuss the surprise ending.
3) Have the students write a familiar fairy tale but change the ending to the unexpected.

Additional Activity:

1) Read *The Frog Princess?* aloud, but stop after the prince kisses the frog.
2) Have the students write a description of what the frog turns into after the kiss.
3) Share the examples.
4) Read the real ending.
5) Have the student rework their ending to one that is unexpected.
6) Have the students write a different familiar fairy tale but change the ending to the unexpected by changing one of the characters.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Organization?

- Using a familiar story, but then changing the ending in a unique way, creates a sense of how conclusions can make the familiar different
- Focusing on conclusions highlights how they wrap up the piece and leave the reader thinking about the message

Other Favorite Fairytale Titles:

The Frog Prince, Continued
Rumplestiltskin's Daughter
The True Story of the Three Little Pigs
The Jolly Postman
Sleeping Ugly

Organization Activity 3

Book: ***The Storm***
by Marc Harshman

Grades: Third through eighth

Time Required: One class period

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Typed, short descriptive excerpts from the book describing the storm (one set for each pair of students)

What to Do:

1) Give students the descriptive excerpts and encourage them to try to sequence the phrases and sentences describing the storm.
2) Let pairs of students compare the order of their story with what other students decided given the same phrases from the book.
3) As a group, discuss the order of the piece as most people interpreted. Ask for words that are sequencing or transitional words that help the reader know the order.
4) Compare the combined class version to the original story. Discuss any similarities and differences. Do any of the differences change the original piece in a significant way?

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Organization?

- Students practice sequencing skills by looking for transitions and logical connections throughout the story
- Students learn the value of transitions and sequencing clues so the reader is lead through the piece logically

Organization Activity 4

Book: ***The Seasons Sewn***
by Ann Whitford Paul

Grades: All

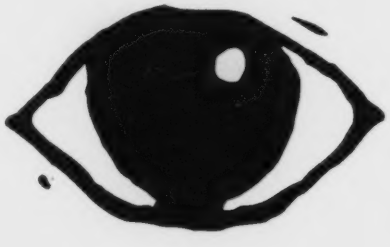
Time Required: 30 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) Book
2) Graph paper
3) Coloring material (crayons, pencils, pens)
4) Examples of a few quilt patterns on overhead transparencies

What to Do:

1) Read the book aloud. Put up the example quilt patterns on the overhead as you read about each type.
2) Ask: How is the book organized?
3) List the items in the book that make up the different seasons. How is each item appropriate for the corresponding season?
4) Have the students add to the list for each season.
5) In small groups, pick one of the items, write about it, and then make a quilt square (if time and resources allow).
6) Share the item and the quilt square. Make a large class quilt from the individual squares.



Integration—Math:

Discuss the geometric shapes, patterns, colors, and repetition that a quilt square provides.

Integration—History/Social Studies:

Research one or more of the following topics: the history of the quilt, quilt patterns and their origins, the social implications of quilting on a culture, the Amish culture.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Organization?

- Writing can be organized in a variety of ways, and an overall theme helps the students see a way to organize information
- The format of this book encourages students to see recurring themes as a prime organization structure

Organization Activity 5

Book: *Purr . . . Children's Book Illustrators Brag About Their Cats*
edited by Michael J. Rosen

Grades: Third through 10th

Time Required: 30-40 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Paper and pencil
3) Coloring material

What to Do:

1) Give a pair or small group of students access to a selected page which has an author's cat description and illustration.
2) Let the students read the page and focus on how the author organizes the story and uses the picture as part of that organization.
3) After 5-10 minutes have the students switch pages.
4) Repeat the activity several times.
5) Discuss the variety of organization in the stories. This can be done in small groups or as a whole class with a master list generated.
6) Bring a stuffed animal of a cat or a picture of a cat. Have the students write a story about this cat, working on the trait of organization by using one of the structures they already identified or any new ones they may have identified. They can create the cat's characteristics and personality and illustrate it in their own way.
7) Share the new pieces with the group.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Organization?

- Students can see how a variety of stories on the same topic are organized.
- Students can look at the different genres of writing selected by authors, all on the same subject—cats—and the different forms of organization associated with these modes (narrative, expository, persuasive, poetry).

Organization Activity 6

Book: *The Day I Swapped My Dad For Two Goldfish*
by Neil Gaiman

Grades: Fourth on up

Time Required: 45-60 minutes

Materials/Preparation:
A copy of the book

What to Do:
1) Read the book aloud.
2) Have the students map out all the "swaps" on a flow chart, chalk board, chart pak, etc.
3) Have them design their own items and the people with whom they could swap. (It can be real people and situations or completely made up.)
4) Make a flow chart with the new items.
5) Write a new story based on the flow chart.
6) In teams, act out the new stories for the class.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Organization?
- This story sets a pattern for the students to follow
- In this piece, the organization helps the ideas stand out

Organization Activity 7

Book: *Clown*
by Quentin Blake

Grades: Second through ninth

Time Required: 30 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) Book
2) Paper
3) Colored pencils and pens

What to Do:

1) Show the students the story, but stop on the page when the clown falls out of the tree (page 12).
2) Talk about the sequencing highlights the clown goes though in the story. How do the pictures help tell the story?
3) Give the students an idea for the ending—i.e., have the clown find a loving home (like the original story), or join the circus and become famous.
4) Have the students write or draw pictures that fill in the story. Have them draw and write their ending.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Organization?

- A story has a logical order. There are clues that help the reader follow the story. In *Clown*, the students need to pay careful attention to the clues so they can see the sequencing that occurs.
- By taking the clown on different adventures and making sure the actions link together, the students model sequencing and create stories that don't lose the reader because important facts/clues are missing.
- This activity helps students identify the beginning, middle, and end of a story, and link them all together.

Organization Activity 8

Book: *Antics!*
by Catherine Hepworth

Grades: Fourth through eighth

Time Required: 30-60 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book and drawing paper
2) Several examples of ABC books (check local elementary library for examples)

What to Do:

1) Have a couple of examples of ABC books to show the students. Discuss the qualities of an ABC book (alphabet, order, beginning letter starts the word or the picture identifies the letter, anticipating the next letter, etc.)
2) Read *Antics!* aloud.
3) After a few examples, have the students guess the next word with the corresponding letter. Ask: "What do you think she will use for the letter 'L'?"
4) Work on the meaning of each word and how it relates to the picture.
5) Ask students what the theme is that ties all the letter entries together.
6) Have the students generate a list of topics they can write about. Example: dogs, bikes, a specific teacher, a grade they liked, etc.

Additional Activity:

Decide on a theme for a new alphabet book. Each student can be responsible for a specific letter of the alphabet. Or, each student, pairs, or small groups can write all the ABC's about a topic the whole class agreed to use

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Organization?

- ABC books are a natural selection for organization. The order of the alphabet gives the students a way to organize their thoughts and then put together a book.

Other ABC Books:

Alphabet City
Z Was Zapped
A Walk Through the Forest, and many, many more!

Organization Activity 9

Book: ***Two Bad Ants***
by Chris Van Allsburg

Grades: Third and up

Time Required: 30 minutes

Materials/Preparation:
A copy of the book

What to Do:
1) Show the cover and ask students to predict what is going to happen and what the piece is about.
2) As you read the book, look at the organization of this story. Does it have a beginning that gets your attention and gives clues about what is coming?
3) How do the details add to the story? Can you recall them without looking at the pictures?
4) Do you see a pattern? Do the ants always have a reason to move on?
5) Does the end leave you and the ants in a good spot? What makes it good?

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Organization?
- Provides a strong, clear model of sequential organization
- Shows how organization provides a skeleton for the ideas to develop

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Organization Activity 10

Book: *Going Home*
by Eve Bunting

Grades: Fourth through eighth

Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) 4x6 or larger cards to use for sequencing statements
3) Markers

What to Do:

1) Make approximately seven sequencing cards using text from the book; include introduction and conclusion, as well as several parts from the body.
2) Ask the students to sequence the cards following the reading of *Going Home*.
3) Discuss the characteristics which help the students identify the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. (Elicit transition words, sequencing, patterns, and evidence of pacing.)
4) Ask students to work in pairs. Pick another book and see if the same characteristics are present in the organizational structure of the new book.
5) Ask the students to make their own sets of sequencing cards for their book and share them back with the group.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Organization?

- The students will be better prepared for properly revising the organizational parts of their writing if they can identify qualities of organization
- The students will practice key organizational strategies of sequencing, linking, transitions, and pacing

Organization Activity 11

Book: ***Sleeping Ugly***
by Jane Yolen

Grades: Fourth on up

Time Required: One to two hours

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Scratch paper and lined paper
3) Pencils, crayons, pens

What to Do:

1) Read the story.
2) Brainstorm a list of other fairy tales.
3) Pick one and examine the beginning, middle, and ending.
4) Have the students change the middle and the ending to this other fairy tale.
5) Write the new version and illustrate it.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Organization?

- Authors have to organize their ideas so they make sense. Students practice organizing their own middles and endings of a fairy tale, i.e., *The Three Little Pigs*, *Cinderella*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*
- Learning to identify the different qualities of organization will give students welcome insight into this trait as they create their own original works

Organization Activity 12

Book: ***Meanwhile Back at the Ranch***
by Trinka Hakes Noble

Grades: Third through eighth

Time Required: 30 minutes

Materials/Preparation:
A copy of the book

What to Do:
1) Read the book aloud.
2) Talk together about how one page is about low-key town and next page is high-key ranch. Pattern includes alternating those two.
3) As a group, brainstorm other possible contrasts.
4) Work in pairs to make a class book using the close "Meanwhile, back at school, _____," and "Meanwhile, back at home, _____" on the other side.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Organization?
- Using a pattern to teach organization for putting a book together
- Showing a different way of organizing ideas

USE PICTURE BOOKS TO TEACH THE TRAIT OF:

Voice

- Compare the voices of two different authors exploring the same topic or idea
- After reading a variety of different picture books, make a list of all the words that can describe voice— angry, passionate, thoughtful, considerate, loving, mean-spirited, charming, eloquent, etc.
- Play "Hearing Voices" by reading passages from familiar authors' works and matching their styles to their books
- Make a list of places you notice voice making a difference—the type of books/print you like to read (what kind of voice is it?)—the things that you don't like to read (what kind of voice is it?)
- Pick a famous person and explain an important concept or idea to that person in picture book format
- Write a letter to a favorite author whose book(s) you love

Voice Activity 1

Book: ***What You Know First***
by Patricia MacLachlan

Grades: All

Time Required: At least 45-60 minutes, but it will probably grow to an extended writing project.

Materials/Preparation:
A copy of the book—that's it! (OK, maybe some writing and drawing paper, too.)

What to Do:

1) Discuss with students their earliest memories of where they were born, lived, and grew up. Allow them to imagine as far back as they can. Some will remember early childhood, others will not. It's OK—just help them roll back time to the moment they first recall.
2) Model what you mean by this by sharing a memory of your own. Include in your description pictures in your mind of people, places, sights, sounds, smells—even if they are very random.
3) As students talk, emphasize that each person has their own memories. No one will have the same as anyone else even if they grew up in exactly the same places. The point to emphasize in this part of the lesson is that the individual experience is what makes a good seedbed for an idea to write or draw.
4) As students talk more and more, encourage them to draw pictures of little moments they remember, colors, shapes, places, dates—whatever. The more you all talk as a group, the clearer their own memories will become. The more they capture in words or phrases, drawings, or impressions, the better.
5) Now read a copy of *What You Know First*, by Patricia MacLachlan. This reading should not take more than about 10 minutes, even if you do a dramatic reading with lots of pauses and thoughtful quiet time.
6) As you are reading, encourage students to keep adding more to their pictures or adding words to their papers as they think of them.
7) After the reading, let students talk. Did they like this book? Did it make them feel anything? What did they feel? Record these comments on the overhead projector so all students can see. Chart paper can work well here, too.

8) Now go back and ask them to tell you their favorite parts—the parts they remember. Reread those pages or parts of those pages to the group. See if they can tell you why those passages are so memorable. (Word choice will be key here!)
9) When the discussion reaches a logical sense of closure, ask students to look at their own words, phrases, or drawings, and see if clear images of their early memories begin to emerge.
10) Ask them to write and draw more about these memories. If they want to use the same format as the book, that's fine. Perhaps they, too, had to move when they were very little and miss the place they first knew. But others may have another memory to share. Another place, time, and sense can be captured in words and/or pictures. Encourage students to decide for themselves if they have anything to share on this topic and to make an author's decision about the best way to share it. It may be a short scenario, or it may turn into a longer piece.
11) Whatever students decide to do, let it be their decision. Show them how different members of the class are approaching this topic in unique and different ways. Encourage this—and model it yourself by writing or drawing a piece of the memory you shared with them earlier.
12) Display these early drafts for all to see. Encourage them to borrow ideas from each other. If you wish, ask students to refine their work by rethinking word choices, strong verbs, and clear imagery. Use both text and pictures to make these mental pictures come to life. Some students will want to go on with their work and take it to a polished, publishable stage. Others will be satisfied with their draft. Allow students to make those choices for themselves. Remember, this is a lesson on VOICE, so we want them to have time and opportunity to discover their own voices.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Voice?

- Validates individual experiences that are different from the experiences of others
- Rewards risk—making personal writer's decisions that may not be the same as their neighbor's
- Provides the opportunity to hear the voices of others
- Connects the trait of voice to word choice
- Allows voice to emerge over time, not assuming that it will "pop out" on the first try

Voice Activity 2

Book: *I Am The Dog/I Am The Cat*
by Donald Hall

Grades: Second through fifth

Time Required: 45-60 minutes

Materials/Preparation:
1) A copy of the book
2) Multiple copies of typed sections of the book

What to Do:
1) Brainstorm characteristics of dogs and/or cats. Use pictures to help get ideas.
2) Read book in a "normal" voice.
3) Pass out copies of pieces of the story to pairs of kids with the instruction to come up with voices for the cat or dog.
4) Ask the students to read their part in a voice they think matches the animal and the message.
5) As a group, discuss their "voice choices" and which they found the most effective.
6) Let students read the piece again and try out new voices.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Voice?
- Matching tone to text context, voice
- Listening to other voices and trying out new voices

Voice Activity 3

Book: ***White Socks Only***
by Evelyn Coleman

Grades: Fourth through eighth

Time Required: 30 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) Book
2) Paper and pencil

What to Do:

1) Have students listen for words or sentences that capture the voices of the granddaughter and grandma:
   Granddaughter is first couple of pages of the book.
   Grandma when she is younger is throughout the story.
2) List the main characters.
3) Read the book aloud.
4) As you read, ask the students to select one of the characters and listen to the piece from that person's point of view.
5) Have students share their lists by character. Reread the book if needed to help expand the list.
6) Have the students write from one of the other characters' points of view (Chicken Man, statue of the soldier, angry white man, old black woman, Mama, other black people, bystanders on the street or in the park) and add to the story.
7) Link this activity in their minds to the trait of voice and go through the criteria with them as they rework the story from a specific point of view.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Voice?

- Identifying the voices of the characters and the feelings behind them gives the students a model
- By changing the point of view of the story and becoming one of the other characters, the students get to practice writing in different voices

Voice Activity 4

Book: *I Am The Dog/I Am The Cat*
by Donald Hall

Grades: Third through eighth

Time Required: 30 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Paper, pencils, markers

What to Do:

1) Have two students take on the roles of the dog and the cat. Read aloud to the class after they have practiced. (They could even dress up as the characters.)
2) Make two lists on the board or a large piece of paper; one for the dog and one for the cat.
3) Ask "What is the dog's voice? What words are used to get the impression across?" Then do the same thing for the cat.
4) Have the students write about two animals/things that are opposites by focusing on different voices (cat and mouse, horse and cow, truck and car, girl and boy).

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Voice?

- This book is a good example of contrasting two different voices
- As the lesson expands past the two original subjects, each subject needs to portray itself differently, and learn to use just the right words to express specific characteristics and voice of that animal or object

Voice Activity 5

Book: *Hoops*
by Robert Burleigh

Grades: Fourth and up

Time Required: 30-40 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Examples of Nike advertisements and slogans from magazines, newspapers, and commercials (or any easily recognized company)

What to Do:

1) Show the Nike advertisements. Be sure to secure permission first.
2) Have the students generate a list of words that describe the voice or tone of the advertisement.
3) What is the message that is being sold? How is it created with words?
4) Read aloud *Hoops*.
5) Discuss the tone/voice of this book. What makes it intense? (Focus on the words, sentence structure, and punctuation.) How is it similar to a Nike ad?
6) Have the students pick a sport of their own and write a Nike advertisement. Have the students focus on the voice/tone of the piece (intense, carefree, age-specific, etc.). Ask "What are they trying to sell?"

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Voice?

- The in-your-face, aggressive, powerful messages of the Nike advertisements are very much a part of today's society. Their tone and voice sends more than just a message about sports equipment
- The book *Hoops* is another example of the intensity words can have and the voice is expressed by carefully selected words

Voice Activity 6

Book: *I Am The Dog/I Am The Cat*
by Donald Hall

Grades: Fourth on up

Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Materials/Preparation:
A copy of the book

What to Do:
1) Read the book. How were the cat and the dog different? Brainstorm and chart in columns.
2) If we gave the dog the cat's attitude, what would we have to change?
3) Choose one moment from the book and change the dog's and cat's roles. Model for the class.
4) Bring out the idea that the dog and the cat are each unique. Are your friends unique? Are you? Of course!
5) Pick two other different animals and write a list of their traits (e.g., a bird and a fish). You may want to demonstrate a model using an apple and an orange.
6) Change or rewrite the story using two different animals or combine pairs of animals to make a class book.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Voice?
- Highlights differences and similarities between two things
- Emphasizes how differences define a personality
- Links individuality with voice

Voice Activity 7

Book Titles: ***Antics!***
by Catherine Hepworth
Two Bad Ants
by Chris Van Allsburg

Grade Level: Fourth through ninth

Time Required: One to two class periods

Materials/Preparation Needed:

1) A copy of the above books
2) Dictionary
3) Thesaurus or book of synonyms

What to Do:

1) Start a discussion with students about what a typical day in an ant's life might be like.
2) Read a copy of *Antics!* by Catherine Hepworth. Have students, with the aid of a dictionary, generate their own A-Z list of "ant" words.
3) Read *Two Bad Ants* by Chris Van Allsburg. As you read the story, ask students to visualize the experience of these "naughty ants."
4) Using the point of view of an ant, have kids write as if they were an ant who discovers a kitchen filled with heavenly morsels of food or an ant who comes across a most delightful picnic spot.
5) Incorporate as many "ant" words as you can.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Voice?

- Explores other points of view
- Establishes tone for students' own writing
- Identifies purpose and audience for writing

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Voice Activity 8

Book: *Dear Children of the Earth*
by Schim Schimmel

Grades: Third through eighth

Time Required: 60 minutes

Materials/Preparation:
1) A copy of the books
2) Paper, pencils, crayons, markers

What to Do:
1) Read book to class.
2) Choose one or more of the following activities:
   a. Who is doing the talking? Draw or write how Mother Earth feels.
   b. Have animals "write" back to Mother Earth.
   c. Have animals "write" to children.
   d. Children respond to Mother Earth with a plan. What can they do?

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Voice?
- Practicing voice by assuming the role of an animal
- Looking at point of view through different eyes
- Writing informational pieces with voice that is appropriate to purpose and audience

Voice Activity 9

Book: *Fly Away Home*
by Eve Bunting

Grades: Elementary on up

Time Required: Three 30-minute sessions (approximately)

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Paper

What to Do:

1) Read the story aloud.
2) Discuss the topic of homelessness and discuss feelings—why don't they want to be noticed?
3) Read it again and look for phrases/sentences that show this feeling. Look for words and ideas that help you understand the feeling, i.e., the boy's encounter with the bird—how does the author portray what the boy is feeling?
4) Suggested activity: Write a sequel in which the boy and his father find a home, and share their sequels with the class or group. Or, write what happens next in this story—does the boy get discovered? What happens?

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Voice?

- Identifying voice by examining an author's style
- Exploring their own voices as they rewrite the ending

Voice Activity 10

Book: *The Snowman*
by Raymond Briggs

Grades: Kindergarten through 12th

Time Required: 45-60 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) Several soft cover copies of the book
2) Optional: the video, *The Snowman*, 26 minutes, ISBN 157-50141-3
3) Writing and/or drawing papers

What to Do:

1) Divide the class into groups of four or five and give each group a copy of the book, *The Snowman*, by Raymond Briggs.
2) Ask the groups to "read" the wordless picture book and record how they feel about the piece, or how it makes them feel at the end of each page. Each person should keep his or her own list. At the end of each page, the groups should stop and allow time to record feelings on individual pieces of paper. (For young writers, allow them to capture the moods, feelings, and tones of the piece in pictures and then allow time for them to talk and explain their choices.)
3) After all groups have finished with the story, have them share their descriptions of the way the story made them feel with the whole group. You should have many different responses since the piece changes its tone as it progresses.
4) Record these responses on the chalk board or the overhead so everyone can see the varied voices that each reader "heard" from this piece. Now group the responses by type: sad, lonely, happy, adventurous, etc.
5) Discuss the quality of voice with students. (Hand out a copy of the rubric on voice; choose the version that is most appropriate for the age of students with whom you work.) Help them to see that a piece of writing can purposefully change its voice as it develops, but there must be a strong sense of reader-writer interaction throughout; otherwise, the reader loses interest and doesn't want to finish the piece. Ask them how their descriptions of voice might change if the story itself changed. What if it got scary, suspenseful, or silly?
6) If you wish, share the video of *The Snowman* and see if students have more descriptors of the trait of voice from this story now that music has been added.

7) Ask students to talk about other books that they think have a lot of voice. If possible, let them go to the library and find examples, or look through books in your classroom collection. As they find books that are strong examples of voice, ask them to record descriptors of the type of voice found in the piece in their writer's notebooks or on a bulletin board in the classroom where examples are collected and displayed.

Additional Activity:

When students find other picture books that they think have a lot of voice, see if they can match music pieces to the text. Part of what makes *The Snowman* piece so effective is the use of music in the video presentation. See if students can create similar matches of music to voice for their own books.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Voice?

- Reading a piece with a focus on identifying the voice of the piece
- Connecting music to voice
- Describing voice with specific vocabulary
- Using the rubric that describes the quality of voice to find other examples

USE PICTURE BOOKS TO TEACH THE TRAIT OF:

Word Choice

- Make a list of striking phrases or words you find in picture books.
- Highlight active verbs.
- Examine the proportion of types of words found in picture books:
  - How many verbs?
  - How many nouns?
  - How many adjectives and adverbs?
- Discuss the different word choice techniques picture book authors use to create pictures in the mind.
- Write a picture book using colorless, redundant words. Now rewrite it using colorful, illustrative language. Compare and contrast.
- Find examples of "everyday" words used well.

Word Choice Activity 1

Book: *Earth: The Elements*
by Ken Robbins

Grades: Fourth and up

Time Required: At least 45 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Materials from encyclopedias, textbooks, and other physical science reference materials on the same topics as this picture book: volcanoes; earthquakes; mountains; igneous, sedimentary, metamorphic rock; fossils, and so on.
3) A place to record words and phrases that students discover so they can be publicly displayed—chart pack, big piece of butcher paper, chalk/white board.

What to Do:

1) Students can help collect written and visual material about the topics found in this picture book. They can consult textbooks, encyclopedias, the Internet, magazines, and any other resource readily available. The importance of this is to have a variety.
2) Divide the group into teams assigned to different topics. Each team reads and discusses the variety of material provided by you and them on their assigned Earth Science topics.
3) After some initial time to sort the material, ask students to begin recording the vocabulary choices writers make in describing the topic. Do they use lots of scientific language? Do they use simple words? Do they use a combination? What about the verbs? Are they passive or active? These observations should be written on a chart, on the overhead, or someplace where other students can see and respond to their observations on word choice.

4) Open some discussion about the different ways authors used language in different pieces about the same topic, and ask students to rank the same pieces according to which they found the most interesting. See if they can write or tell the reason why. Then ask them to rank and sort the pieces according to which they think had the best information and explain why. Now ask them to sort the pieces according to who they think the intended audience might be . . . students? What ages? Adults? Scientists? The general public?
5) Discuss each of these ranking and sorting activities. Do all the groups come to the same conclusions? Why or why not? Ask them to make some group decisions about how a writer should consider the use of word choice to fit the purpose and audience of their writing. Would you always use the same vocabulary? Why or why not?
6) Allow each group time to go back into their pieces and pull out favorite descriptive phrases or words—ones which linger in their minds, or clarified a difficult concept in language that was both interesting and understandable. See how many come from which sources. Ask them where they find the examples of expository writing that they enjoy reading the most.
7) If time allows, ask students to consider the use of visuals—pictures, charts, graphs, etc., to enhance the meaning of the text. Which trait is this? Or is there one . . . yet?

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice?

- Explores the use of specific, content-centered vocabulary
- Compares and contrasts the use of language for different purposes and audiences
- Develops an eye for key words or phrases that work particularly well
- Builds a sense of confidence that it's OK to make even very technical writing interesting to read

Word Choice and Organization Activity 2

Book: *The Old Man and His Door*
by Gary Soto

Grades: Kindergarten through sixth

Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Drawing paper and crayons
3) Sentence strips

What to Do:

Word Choice

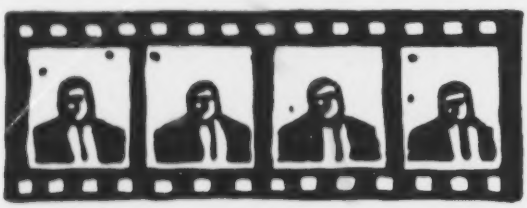
1) As a group, reread the story and list the descriptive vocabulary (e.g., 'mountains of suds'). Allow students to select and illustrate one.
2) Encourage students to brainstorm the meaning of new words.

Organization

1) Ask students to illustrate and write about (if appropriate) the order of events in the story. The number of pictures required could vary depending upon the skills of the students.
2) Select sentences from various parts of the text and record on sentence strips. Help students place these in the proper order.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice or Organization?

- Illustrates how using a word incorrectly can completely change a story's meaning
- Shows sequential organization and a sense of resolution



Word Choice Activity 3

Book: *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*
by Mem Fox

Grades: Third through 10th

Time Required: Five minutes to read, two to three days to write/revise

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Paper and pencils/pens

What to Do:

1) Read the book aloud to students.
2) Ask students to brainstorm about memories as a group.
3) Have students write a list of their memories on their own.
4) Writing prompt: You are 75 years old and are collecting a basket of your favorite memories of your childhood to share. Describe what you would put in the basket, the story behind the memory object, and with whom you would share your memory basket.
5) Share favorites with class.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice?

- Encourages students to use energetic verbs, vivid words and phrases
- Focuses students on the specifics and details of the objects which helps them focus their writing and use descriptive words

Word Choice Activity 4

Book: ***My Mama Had a Dancing Heart***
by Libba Moore Gray

Grade Level: Second through fourth (with help from an older class to create partners)

Time Required: 45 minutes

Materials/Preparation:
1) Paper
2) Crayons or markers

What to Do:
1) Read the book aloud.
2) Have students write down phrases that appeal to them. Use the buddy system with younger students. The younger student can tap the "buddy" (older) student on the shoulder when they hear a phrase they like, telling the older student to write down that phrase.
3) Have students illustrate their favorite phrases.
4) Talk about how these words created the pictures in their minds.
5) Connect their illustrations to the text from the book (buddies can help), and then display all the illustrations with text.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice?
- Students are specifically listening for the use of the language and thinking about how they can specifically illustrate these word images
- Words can create sounds and make feelings and students learn how to make precise choices to create these feelings and emotions

Word Choice Activity 5

Book: *Earthdance*
by Joanne Ryder

Grades: First through third

Time Required: Two to three class periods

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book *Earth Dance*
2) A copy of the book *Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me* by Eric Carle
3) Chart paper

What to Do:

1) Read *Earth Dance* aloud and discuss the illustrative language.
2) Place lists of words or phrases on chart paper.
3) Discuss the "pictures" these words create.
4) Discuss moon rotation and phases.
5) Read *Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me* by Eric Carle aloud.
6) Write words and phrases that could be used to create connections to the moon.
7) Write a language experience story entitled *Moon Dance*. Use the words and illustrations of the students.
8) Have some children create and tape the music which makes the moon dance.
9) Have students read *Moon Dance* with their music playing in the background.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice?

- Students develop the ability to use "colorful" words and communicate a thought or picture for others
- Students connect words to images and feelings

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Word Choice Activity 6

Book: *Hoops*
by Robert Burleigh

Grades: Fourth through sixth

Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Materials/Preparation:
A copy of the book

What to Do:
1) Read the book to the class.
2) In small groups, ask students to take each page, in order, and condense it to one word that expresses the skill or emotion revealed. Have them write those words vertically, to create a poem that parallels *Hoops*.
3) Ask students to think of another sport they love to play. Have them isolate the skills and describe them through alliteration.
4) Through illustration, ask them to pack the energy of one moment into a picture of their favorite sport.
5) Ask them to expand this piece into a longer, descriptive piece. Will adding information take anything away from the intensity, or can it add to it?

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice?
- Students listen to the singing of the words used in alliteration and to how they "propel" the reader through the game, giving it vitality
- Students practice condensing words and phrases as they examine their precision in text

Word Choice Activity 7

Book: *Verdi*
by Janell Cannon

Grades: Fourth through tenth

Time Required: Two 30-minute sessions

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Research on other animals
3) Copies of a couple of pages from the book with all the descriptive, lively words/verbs deleted and replaced with a blank line

What to Do:

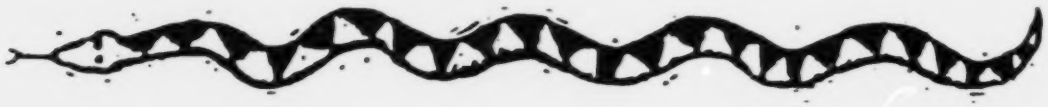
1) Make predictions of the story based on the cover.
2) Keep a "before" list of ideas, descriptions, and personality traits of the snake based on the predictions.
3) Read the story aloud.
4) Make a new list of descriptions, personality traits, etc. about the snake, Verdi.
5) Go back and compare the two lists. What is the same? What is different?
6) Hand out copies of the prepared pages.
7) Assign groups of students to a certain characteristic for Verdi. For example: He can be shy, ferocious, intimidated, sad, curious, etc.
8) Have the students fill in the blanks with different lively words using a thesaurus or other resource based on the personality trait they are trying to represent. (Make sure students know how to use a thesaurus appropriately!)
9) Have the students read their rewritten pages to the class.

Additional Assignment:

Write a similar story about an animal that changes its color or appearance (i.e., ugly duckling into a swan, caterpillar into a butterfly)

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice or Voice?

- Taking out the descriptive, lively words and having the students find new ones demonstrates the importance of choosing the right types of words to create the desired tone
- Making good choices of new words to use in text invites students to be creative as they write their own pieces



Word Choice Activity 8

Book: ***I Love You the Purplest***
by Barbara M. Joosse

Grades: Third and up

Time Required: Two 30-minute sessions

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Examples of colors, paper and paint
3) Pictures with strong, deep colors

What to Do:

1) Read the book aloud.
2) Talk and identify examples of word choice. Ask "What lines do you remember?" Reread sections of the book if it is needed to trigger their memory.
3) Go back and reread the description of why the mother loves her two sons. "I love you the bluest!" and "I love you the reddest!"
4) Discuss the choice of words and the images they bring to mind.
5) Have the students pick a color and write about the qualities and objects that color brings to mind.
6) Have the students think of someone they are close to and describe that person using a color. Use the author's examples as a model.

Additional Activity:

Have the students write a list of colors and what they could be related to, i.e., green = envy, white = purity, etc. (May require some research.)

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice?

- Students will explore working on word choice to create an example based on the model
- Students will use specific choice of words and objects to express what's special about the person they are writing about

Word Choice Activity 9

Book: *Hoops*
by Robert Burleigh

Grades: Fourth through eighth

Time Required: 30-40 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) A few selected sentences from the book
3) A folder to cover the title of the book

What to Do:

1) Hand out a sample sentence or phrase to a small group of students.
2) Have students discuss the imagery and word choice. What does the sentence refer to or describe?
3) Share ideas and get other students' interpretations.
4) Have students rewrite the sentences by replacing words in the sentence with synonyms or antonyms. Discuss how the imagery and tone changes.
5) Read the book aloud. HIDE the cover and DON'T READ THE FIRST PAGE ("Hoops. The Game. Feel it.")
6) Ask "What is the story about?" Discuss how the words help create the image of basketball.
7) Ask students to summarize the book and write their own first line. Then compare it to the original.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice?

- Students see first-hand that the choice of one word or phrase can create a mood or feeling or destroy it
- The choice of words helps create very powerful and specific imagery. This book is an excellent model of word choice. The words are specific, intentional, and powerful. They work together like pieces in a puzzle, fitting together to describe one topic

Word Choice Activity 10

Book: ***Have You Seen Trees?***
by Joanne Oppenheim

Grades: Third through 10th

Time Required: Two 30-minute sessions

Materials/Preparation:

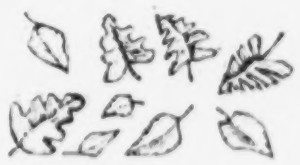
1) A copy of the book
2) Pictures of trees
3) A place to take a walk and look at trees
4) Resources of different types of trees (pamphlets, encyclopedia articles, books, Internet reference sites, etc.)

What to Do:

1) Read the book aloud.
2) If possible, take a walk and look at some trees or look at pictures of trees. Examine the different pictures of trees you have provided.
3) Make a list of descriptive words or phrases that describe the trees—similarities and differences.
4) Write a description about a tree for each season of the year or for a variety of tree types.
5) Have students read their descriptions aloud without revealing what kind of tree it is. See if they can guess based on the description what kind of tree it is. Be sure that students are making their guesses based on the descriptions, not the pictures!

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice?

- Students practice identifying and writing specific words to describe a particular type of tree which helps them develop their precision in word choice
- Students get good practice with precise nouns and use of modifiers



Word Choice Activity 11

Book: ***My Grandma Lived in Gooligulch***
by Graeme Base

Grades: Fifth through eighth

Time Required: 30 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Dictionary

What to Do:

1) Discuss the six traits.
2) Read "My Grandma Lived in Gooligulch" and discuss language differences. Show map and locate Australia.
3) Create a word bank with the unfamiliar words and add to the list as the year moves on.
4) Identify meanings in the book using context clues. Rewrite the book in American English; discuss and compare the differences.
5) Recognize there are many ways to say the same things.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice?

- Reminds students to focus on vocabulary differences
- Develops use of context clues to learn new words

Word Choice Activity 12

Book: *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*
by Mem Fox

Grade: Third through sixth

Time Required: 60 minutes

Materials/Preparation:
A copy of the book

What to Do:
1) Introduce what a simile is.
2) Give examples on board.
3) Have students help you substitute words.
4) Read the book, asking students to raise their hands when they think they hear one and identify it. Example: voice like a giant, as precious as gold.
5) Have students write about a memory they want to share and include at least one simile.

Tip: They may have to play with the way they use the words to get the simile down clearly. Example: She had eyes like bowling balls (we understand they are big and round).

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice?
- Working with words to create images
- Choosing words with precision for maximum effect

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Word Choice Activity 13

Book: ***My Mama Had a Dancing Heart***
by Libba Moore Gray

Grades: Third through ninth

Time Required: 60 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Music to represent the seasons (Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, George Winston's *Fall*, *Spring*, etc., *Nutcracker or The Grand Canyon Suite)*

What to Do:

1) Read story and show pictures.
2) Read again to hear language and phrases.
3) Discuss descriptive phrases for each season.
4) Have students divide into four groups—one for each season.
5) Have groups work with music to dance/dramatize sessions.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice?

- Connects students to the rhythm of the words from the story
- Shows how words can be selected to create vivid imagery

Word Choice Activity 14

Book: ***Amber on the Mountain***
by Tony Johnston

Grades: Elementary/middle school

Time Required: 45 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

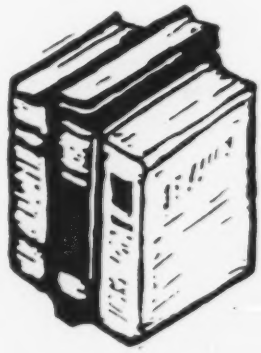
1) A copy of the book
2) Paper and pencils

What to Do:

1) Read the book aloud.
2) Reread pages with simile and metaphor examples.
3) Brainstorm "powerful" words/phrases using ideas found in the story.
4) Define/discuss similes and metaphors.
5) Reread some lines *without* the simile/metaphor. "Her tongue curled to her upper lip in concentration..." (like a lizard stalking a bug).
6) Discuss why/how similes/metaphors make the words/story more interesting.
7) Write and/or illustrate similes/metaphors from this book or other books.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice?

- Similes and metaphors are powerful tools for students to understand the trait
- Expanding students' choice of words to be more precise



Word Choice Activity 15

Book: ***Double Trouble in Walla Walla***
by Andrew Clements

Grades: Third through 12th

Time Required: 45 minutes

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Overhead or chart pack to record word choice brainstorms

What to Do:

1) Ask students to name all the word pairs they can think of, such as: double trouble, whip lash, jingle jangle, tootie fruitie, hodge podge, etc. Record them on the board or on a large sheet of butcher paper so all student can see them and there is plenty of room to add more.
2) Once they have exhausted their own ideas, read the book *Double Trouble in Walla Walla* to them. Encourage them to write down any word pairs that are in this story that they liked and aren't already on their list. (My favorite is Eeeka-freaka!).
3) Discuss the story and its conclusion. Now ask pairs of student to write a new ending to the story which takes it in a different direction. Or, if your students wish to, allow them time to write a whole new story, beginning to end, using as many word pairs from their list or their imagination as they can. For example, if it is close to a holiday, they may want to write twists and turns on popular holiday stories.
4) Give them plenty of time to write, revise, and share their work with other groups. See which group was able to work in the most wacky word pairs. Remember—they have to make sense in the context of the story.
5) Once the writing is done, ask students to illustrate a few of their pages and make them into a book. Laminate the pages and bind them with plastic comb binding.
6) Arrange for the students to read their pieces to a class of younger kids. Make sure that the younger kids have a chance to talk about the trait of word choice before the older students come for a visit. Group the younger students with

older students and rotate the stories until everyone has had enough.

7) Now see if the younger students can write wacky word pair thank you notes to the class of older students after the visit. This could be the beginning of a very positive and productive relationship between the two classes that can be nurtured and encouraged all year long!
8) Leave the wacky word pair books in the library or media center for everyone to enjoy!

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Word Choice?

- Playing with words to make wacky pairs that rhyme
- Listening to the sounds of the words and their syllabication to make good choices for pairs of words and those which fit best in the sentences
- Practicing precision with words—even when they are just for fun

USE PICTURE BOOKS TO TEACH THE TRAIT OF:

Sentence Fluency

- Read poetry aloud and ask, "What makes the language flow?" Make a list of ideas. Do the same with prose
- Use choral reading to practice hearing where and how sentences and phrases begin and end. Emphasize inflections, pauses, etc.
- Type the text of a picture book without any sentence breaks; then rewrite it, showing the natural fluency through sentences, patterns and punctuation
- List sentence beginnings to see how much variety authors use
- Read two or three picture books and count how many simple, compound, and complex sentences are in each. Why do some sentence patterns work better in certain sections of the text?
- Tell a story/explain a concept aloud before you try to write it. Ask a partner to write down the beginning of each sentence as you speak

Sentence Fluency Activity 1

Book: *The Ghost Dance*
by Alice McLerran

Grades: All (but especially great for middle and high school)

Time Required: Several class periods (about two hours total)

Materials/Preparation:

1) A copy of the book
2) Typed cards with select sections of the text for small groups to read

What to Do:

1) Read the book aloud to students. Let them enjoy the ideas, listen, and hear the language. Don't forget to share the author and illustrator notes at the end of this piece which tells the history behind the Paiute Indian Ghost Dance. See if the students can connect the themes of integrity, nonviolence, and social and environmental health to other great world philosophies and traditions.
2) Discuss their impressions of this author's work and the illustrator's beautiful accompanying pictures.
3) Read the book again, this time asking for students to jot down on scratch paper any key words or phrases that just sound good to them as they listen.
4) Share the selections the students recorded. Talk about what makes something pleasing to the ear. Is it rhythm? Is it cadence? What is fluency, anyway?
5) Divide the class into groups. Pass out a typed card with a section of the text from this picture book. Ask students to examine it carefully. How do the sentences begin? Is there good variety in sentence patterns? What about length? Do they think this piece is fluent? (Correct answer—YES!)
6) Try this picture book as a choral reading. There are many ways to do this. Here's one suggestion: Ask small groups of students to rehearse and practice their section of the text. Arrange the groups in sequences so as one finishes reading, the other begins until the text is complete.

7) Allow students time to rehearse their parts, emphasizing that they can do whole passages together, separate words by single voices, or chime in together for emphasis. Since each small group has a small amount of text, encourage them to read it FLUENTLY, and to consider the different methods they could use to make it sound pleasing to the ear as it is read aloud.
8) Perform the choral reading as a class. After the first performance, allow students to make changes, rehearse more, and then do it again. (They may wish to add music, sound effect or their own visuals . . this is great!) Choral readings are deceptively difficult, so allow for plenty of time. If it comes out well, your students will want to perform their choral reading for other students, parents, or staff. GOOD!
9) To debrief this activity, refer students to the Sentence Fluency writing criteria. Ask them which of the descriptors under "5—Strong Performance" were part of their considerations as they did the choral reading. Ask students to select other texts to use for choral readings as well. This lesson can be repeated with many variations off and on over many, many years! Fluency is a very oral trait, so the more students learn to hear the language, the better.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Sentence Fluency?

- Hearing beautiful language used well to develop an ear for fluency
- Examining sentences, phrases, and individual words as they connect
- Using speaking skills to emphasize rhythm and flow
- Discussing techniques that writers use to make their work sound good

Sentence Fluency Activity 2

Book: ***All the Places to Love***
by Patricia Maclachlan

Grades: Third through sixth

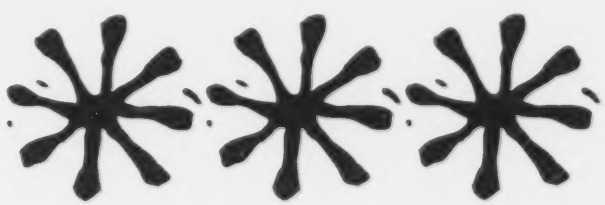
Time Required: One to two class periods

Materials/Preparation:
A copy of the book

What to Do:
Read the book aloud. Select one of the following options:

a. Write a new poem using some of the phrases heard while listening to the reading.
b. Rewrite as reader's theater. Cast individual students in roles of Eli (main reader), momma, papa, grandfather and grandmother. Remaining students form pairs or small groups to read shorter descriptive passages on each page.
c. Have students draw pictures they see in their minds, adding phrases they like to the picture.
d. Have students write a poem about a favorite place.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Sentence Fluency?
- Students learn to listen to the phrasing of the piece
- Students capture key phrases and words which they especially like
- Students hear the language spoken as they share their reader's theater versions



Sentence Fluency Activity 3

Books: ***A Drop of Water***
by Walter Wick

Grades: All

Time Required: 30-60 minutes

Materials/Preparation:
1) A copy of the book
2) Paper and pencil

What to Do:
1) Read a section/page of the book. Example: page 26, "How Clouds Form."
2) Discuss and write down with the students how the author uses a variety of sentence types to describe each process.
3) Read another example and have the students listen for sentence fluency.
4) Take a section of the text and have the students rewrite the paragraph without using sentence fluency. Have them make it as boring as possible. (Short sentences all beginning the same or one long, run-on sentence!)
5) Have students share their work. Compare with the original piece.
6) Have students describe a process, i.e., making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or tying shoes. (Science concepts studied in class are also excellent topics. This would help with integration of curriculum). They then write the process down, focusing on sentence fluency and using the author's examples.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Sentence Fluency?
- Understanding that nonfiction, factual writing does not have to be boring, but can be interesting and concise
- Looking for different sentence patterns, revising pieces to be more/less fluent

Sentence Fluency Activity 4

Book: ***Have You Seen Trees?***
by Joanne Oppenheim

Grades: Third on up

Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Materials/Preparation:
1) A copy of the book
2) Art supplies

What to Do:
1) Draw on students' prior knowledge about their favorite trees, through class discussion. Ask each student to select a favorite tree from ones mentioned in the class discussion.
2) Read the book *Have You Seen Trees?*, paying close attention to the long and stretchy, short and snappy sentence fluency.
3) Have students write a short paragraph about their tree using the writing model from reading selections. Be sure each student has a copy of the sentence fluency page from the rubric so they can refer to it.
4) Have students share their writing and compile a book of their writings, organized by season or the way they described the trees.
5) Students can illustrate their favorite tree to be included in the class book.

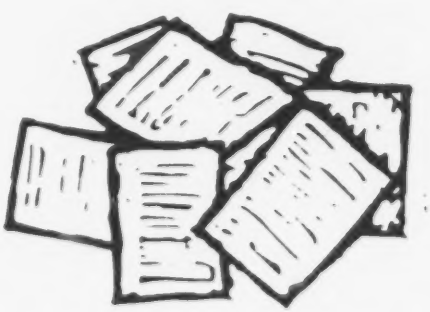
How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Sentence Fluency?
- Students will hear good literature
- Students will practice using voice to personalize, flavor, and develop their own style
- Students will listen to the rhythm of written language
- Students will practice using the sentence fluency trait based on the model

USE PICTURE BOOKS TO TEACH THE TRAIT OF:

Conventions

- Look at picture books with an editor's eye. Can you find any mistakes?
- Select several picture books that contain dialogue: What convention rules do they follow?
- Make a list of the conventions that should be standard and another list of those things that the author should personally control.
- Deliberately make five spelling, five punctuation, five capitalization, and five grammar/usage errors in your own picture book text. Ask someone to find and correct them. (They can correct other things they find, too!)
- Type your picture book onto the computer and use the spell checker, grammar checker, and thesaurus options. What do you have to know about conventions to make the best use of these tools?

In general, the trait of conventions is not one that lends itself well to being taught through picture books. You can use them as wonderful examples, however, of how conventions make the text more readable when done well. Creative people, like teachers, can do the improbable, if not the impossible. Here are a couple of ideas . . .



Conventions Activity 1

Book Title: *Yo! Yes?*
by Chris Raschka

Grade Level: All (but especially good for early writers)

Time Required: 30-45 minutes minimum

Materials/Preparation Needed:
A copy of the book

What to Do:

1) Ask the students to record the text as you read it with them. They can do this by themselves, but you'll get better results if they work in pairs or small groups.

   Yo Yes Hey
   Who You Me
   Yes you Oh
   What's up Not much
   Why No fun
   . . . and so on

   If you want to make this even more challenging for older students, just have them write the words in order without any line changes. The way the text is written here is just like the original text which helps the reader understand the story just by the way the words are broken up by page—take that away and it gets REALLY challenging!
2) Ask them to add punctuation to make the story flow and have meaning.
3) Compare how different groups of students changed the punctuation of their pieces and see if the meaning changes from version to version as a result.
4) Now share with students the original text that has the illustrations and VERY specific punctuation to help the reader understand. Does the original resemble any that the students wrote? Are there twists and turns in meaning in their versions compared to the author's that are due, in part, to changes in punctuation?

5) Let students perform their stories.
6) Have a serious discussion about the use and abuse of editing. After playing with this text, they should be able to see that to make their ideas clear, good use of conventions is a must.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Conventions?

- Students learn to use a variety of punctuation to make meaning clear
- Editing becomes an important part of the writing process
- Students get the opportunity to do their own editing
- Students learn to think about editing and conventions in a new way

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Conventions Activity 2

Book Title: ***The Day I Swapped My Dad For Two Goldfish***
by Neil Gaiman

Grade Level: Fourth through eighth

Time Required: 30 minutes

Materials/Preparation Needed:

1) Several pages of the book on transparencies or shown on opaque projector
2) Several other books with dialogue
3) Examples of cartoon dialogue bubbles (cartoons from the newspaper are a good source)

What to Do:

1) Show examples of cartoon dialogue bubbles. Discuss why they are used and their purpose.
2) Put the example pages on the overhead as you read the story aloud. Point to the conversation as you read it.
3) Discuss the way the author chooses which words are in the bubble and which are not.
4) Have students pick any dialogue from a book of their choice.
5) Write the dialogue (or a section of dialogue) using the cartoon bubbles that are modeled in *The Day I Swapped My Dad For Two Goldfish.* (Dialogue goes in the bubbles.)
6) Extend the activity by giving the students a page of dialogue without any punctuation. Ask them to fill in the punctuation by using the bubble form.

How Does This Activity Connect to the Trait of Conventions?

- Separating the dialogue into cartoon bubbles is the first step to showing students how to demonstrate conversation in writing.
- Experimenting with dialogue and ways to indicate changes in speaker leads to conventional use of punctuation.

General References

Benedict, Susan & Lenore Carlisle, editors. ***Beyond Words: Picture Books for Older Readers and Writers.*** Heinemann, 1992. **Paperback: ISBN 0-435-08710-X.**

A must-read resource for ideas on using picture books to enrich the lives of students from first grade through high school. Very practical suggestions and unit designs. Sprinkled with words of wisdom from such authors as Maurice Sendak, Dr. Seuss, David Macaulay, and Chris Van Allsburg, this readable reference book clearly points the way to using picture books with older readers and writers.

Fox, Mem. ***Dear Mem Fox, I Have Read All Your Books Even the Pathetic Ones, and Other Incidents in the Life of a Children's Book Author.*** **Harcourt Brace, 1992. Paperback: ISBN 0-15-658676-2.**

Do you love a good story? Mem Fox tells all in her wonderful autobiography, which deals primarily with her life becoming a children's picture book author. Her wit and wisdom are guaranteed to keep you reading. Powerful messages for writers, teachers, textbook publishers, and all readers of her stories.

Hall, Susan. ***Using Picture Storybooks to Teach Literary Devices: Recommended Books for Children and Young Adults.*** **Oryx Press, Volume 1, 1990, Volume 2, 1994.**

An annotated bibliography of picture books which illustrate different literary devices. Arranged alphabetically by topic—allusion, flashback, foreshadowing, imagery, personification, poetic justice and so on—with picture book titles and suggestions for developing a better understanding of each literary device. A very helpful shortcut to collecting books on special topics or for literature units focusing on special skills.

Internet, Anyone?

During the past year, friends have referred us to a couple of dynamite Web pages on picture books. With the addition of new sites every day, these references are by no means intended to be complete, but rather an invitation to "surf the net" and see what other wonderful resources are available to support your work using picture books in the classroom.

Try this one for starters:
http://www.beyondbasals.com/older.html

Examples of what you will find at this site . . .
Picture Books for Secondary Students: This 1997 list posted from the Curriculum Resources Laboratory at the University of Iowa focuses on "sophisticated picture books," "parodies/creative writing models," "subjects worthy of further discussion and exploration," and a few suggestions for "author studies."

Picture Books for the Secondary Classroom: Barbara Brewer features selected books to enhance curriculum topics such as Colonial America, minority experiences, immigration, etc. Selection aids are also listed.

Picture Books for Young Adults: A list of suggestions from Childlit listserv subscribers, compiled by Don Yarman.

Worth a Thousand Words: An Annotated Guide to Picture Books for Older Readers: This guide provides a single source comprehensive listing of 645 picture books and a multitude of ideas about how to use them in class.

And the list goes on and on . . .

Another site to check out:
http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/special/kay/illustration.html

Examples of resources listed at this site:

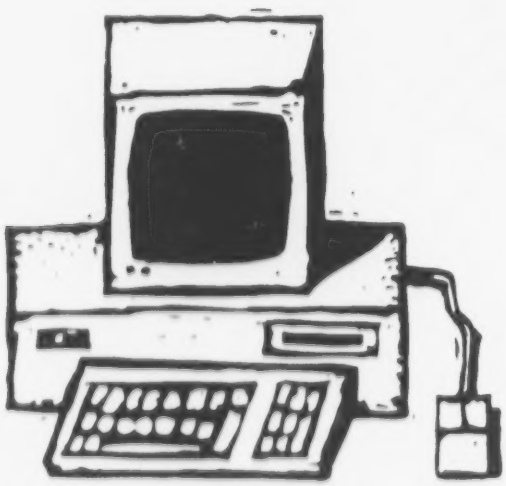
Cianciolo, Patricia. *Picture Books for Children.* 4th ed. Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 1997.

Keifer, Barbara Z. *The Potential of Picture Books: From Visual Literacy to Aesthetic Understanding.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995.

Lima, Carolyn W. and John A. Lima. *A to Zoo: Subject Access to Children's Picture Books.* 4th Ed. New Providence, NJ: R.R. Bowker, 1993.

(This list, too, is expansive and regularly updated.)

Perhaps you know of other Web sites that will help teachers make good choices for selecting and using picture books. We'd love to hear from you as you discover these sites. (e-mail directly to: culhamr@nwrel.org) Thanks!



Author Index

Abeel, Samantha 45
Abercrombie, Barbara 27
Adoff, Arnold 63
Ahlberg, Janet and Allan Ahlberg 27
Allard, Harry and James Marshall 5
Angelou, Maya 5, 45 75
Baker, Keith 63
Bang, Molly 28
Banyai, Istvan 29, 102
Base, Graeme 64, 75, 144
Bash, Barbara 6
Baylor, Byrd 6, 7, 76, 98
Blake, Quentin 29, 111
Blos, Joan W. 29
Boyd, Candy Dawson 46
Bradley, Marie 46
Briggs, Raymond 30, 128
Bruchac, Joseph 47
Bunting, Eve 47, 48, 114, 127
Burdett, Lois 7, 8, 64
Burleigh, Robert 76, 123, 138, 142
Burton, Virginia Lee 30
Cannon, Ann 9
Cannon, Janell 9, 139
Cherry, Lynne 10, 11
Chief Seattle 48
Christelow, Eileen 30
Cisneros, Sandra 77
Clary, Margie Willis 12
Clements, Andrew 64, 148
Coerr, Eleanor 49
Cole, Joanna 12
Coleman, Evelyn 49, 121
Coles, Robert 12
Cooney, Barbara 13

Curry, Barbara K. and James Michael Brodie 49
Dahl, Roald 49
De Paola, Tomie 31
Dorros, Arthur 77
Doubilet, Anne 31
Dragonwagon, Crescent 13
Drake, John W. 31
Duke, Kate 32
Everett, Gwen 13
Feiffer, Jules 32
Fletcher, Ralph 32
Fox, Mem 14, 33, 50, 65, 77, 78, 90, 91, 135, 145
Frasier, Debra 14
Gaiman, Neil 33, 110, 160
Ganeri, Anita 50
Gantos, Jack 34
Garland, Sherry 66
Gerrard, Roy 34
Gray, Libba Moore 78, 97, 136, 146
Greenberg, David 78
Goble, Paul 51
Hall, Donald 34, 120, 122, 124
Harshman, Marc 66, 106
Hathorn, Libby 51
Heller, Ruth 66
Hepworth, Catherine 14, 112, 125
Herron, Carolivia 79
Hest, Amy 35
Hoberman, Mary Ann 35
Hughes, Langston 51
James, Simon 15
Jenkins, Steve 35
Johnson, Stephen T. 15, 88, 99
Johnston, Tony 16
Johnston, Tony 52, 147
Joosse, Barbara M. 67, 141

Kramer, Stephen P. 16, 36, 52
Krull, Kathleen 67
Langen, Annette and Constanza Droop 16
Lawrence, Jacob 79
Lesser, Carolyn 17
Lewis, Paul Owen 17, 68
Little, Jean 53
Littlechild, George 53
Lobel, Arnold 17
Louie, Ai-Ling 54
Lounsbury, Charles 68
Macaulay, David 18, 37
MacLachlan, Patricia 18, 54, 92, 118, 154
Magdanz, James 19
Maizels, Jennie and Kate Petty 85
Mann, Pamela 37, 104
Marshall, Rita 19
Maruki, Toshi 68
Mathers, Petra 19, 37
Matthaei, Gay and Jewel Grutman 54
McDonald, Megan 55
McLerran, Alice 20, 80, 152
Monceaux, Morgan 69
Moss, Marissa 20, 96
Munsch, Robert N. 55
Musgrove, Margaret 69
Myers, Walter Dean 80
Noble, Trinka Hakes 38, 116
Nye, Naomi Shihab 20, 21
Oberman, Sheldon 21
Oppenheim, Joanne 69, 143, 156
Panzer, Nora 80
Patterson, Francine 55
Paul, Ann Whitford 38, 107
Paulsen, Gary 38, 81

Paulson, Tim 56
Pelés, Les Chats 39
Polacco, Patricia 39, 56, 57
Prather, Jo Beecher 21
Raschka, Chris 70, 158
Ringgold, Faith 22, 57
Robbins, Ken 70, 132
Robinson, Aminah Brenda Lynn 22, 93
Rosen, Michael 23, 58, 109
Rosenberg, Liz 58
Ryan, Pam Muñoz 40
Ryder, Joanne 58, 137
Rylant, Cynthia 59, 70, 71, 94
San Souci, Robert D. 59
Say, Allen 82
Schaefer, Carole Lexa 23
Schories, Pat 40
Schroeder, Alan 23
Scieszka, Jon 59, 60
Sendak, Maurice 60
Shange, Ntozake and Romare Bearden 82
Shannon, George 24
Shimmel, Schim 61, 126
Siebert, Diane 82
Soto, Gary 71, 134
Steig, Jeanne 82
Steig, William 72, 73
Thaler, Mike 61
UNICEF 52
Van Allsburg, Chris 24, 41, 113, 125
Viera, Linda 61
Viorst, Judith 41, 83
Vos Wezeman, Phyllis 62
Walker, Alice 73, 91
Walsh, Ellen Stoll 42
Weir, Bob and Wendy Weir 24
Wick, Walter 25, 155

Wiesner, David 42
Willard, Nancy 84
Williams, Vera B. 43
Winter, Jeanette 43
Woolf, Virginia 25
Yolen, Jane 62, 115
Young, Ed 74
Zemach, Margot 43
Zolotow, Charlotte 44

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Title Index

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day 41
ALEXANDER Y EL DIA TERRIBLE, HORRIBLE, ESPANTOSO HORROROSO 83
All the Places to Love 18, 154
Alphabet City 15, 88, 99
The Always Prayer Shawl 21
The Amazing Pop-Up Grammar Book 85
Amber on the Mountain 52, 147
Amelia's Notebook 20, 96
Amos and Boris 72
An Angel for Solomon Singer 59
Antics! 14, 112, 125
Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds 70
The Armadillo from Amarillo 10
Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions 69
Aunt Chip and the Great Triple Creek Dam Affair 56
Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky 22
Aunt Isabel Tells a Good One 32
The Beanstalk Incident 56
Benito's Dream Bottle 20
Benjamin Brody's Backyard Bag 62
Between Earth and Sky: Legends of Native American Sacred Places 47
Big & Little 35
Black and White 37
The Block 51
Brave Irene 72
Brother Eagle, Sister Sky: A Message from Chief Seattle 48
Caleb and Kate 72
The Carousel 58
Caves 52
Celebrate America in Poetry and Art 80
A Chair For My Mother 43
Charlie Anderson 27
Chattanooga Sludge 28
A Child's Portrait of Shakespeare 7

171

Clown 29, 111
Consider the Lemming 82
Daddy, Daddy, Be There 46
The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish 33, 110, 160
Day of the Dead 16
Dear Children of the Earth 61, 126
Dear Mr. Blueberry 15
December 47
Dogteam 81
Double Trouble in Walla Walla 64, 148
The Dragon and the Unicorn 11
The Dreamer 70
A Drop of Water: A Book of Science and Wonder 25, 155
Earth: The Elements 70, 132
Earthdance 58, 137
The Ever-Living Tree: Life and Times of a Coast Redwood 61
Everybody Needs a Rock 6
Fables 17
The Faversham 34
Feathers and Fools 65
The Flag We Love 40
Flute's Journey: The Life of a Wood Thrush 11
Fly Away Home 47, 127
The Frog Prince, Continued 59
The Frog Princess? 37, 104
The Ghost Dance 80, 152
The Gift of the Sacred Dog 51
Go Home, River 19
Going Home 48, 114
Grasper 17
Great Crystal Bear 17
The Great Migration: An American Story 79
The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher 28
Hairs & Pelitos 77
Harlem 80
Have You Seen Trees? 69, 143, 156
Heartland 82

Hey World, Here I Am! 53
Hiroshima No Pika 68
Home 23
Home Place 13
Hoops 76, 123, 138, 142
How to Get Famous in Brooklyn 35
How to Think Like a Scientist 36
I Am The Dog/I Am The Cat 34, 120, 122, 124
I Dream of Peace: Images of War by Children of Former Yugoslavia 52
I Hate to Read! 19
I Know What You Do When I Go To School 9
I Live in Music 82
I Love You the Purplest 67, 141
I'm in Charge of Celebrations 6
If I Were in Charge of the World, and Other Worries 83
Isla 77
It Could Always Be Worse 43
It Was a Dark and Stormy Night 27
Jack's Tale 42
Jazz. My Music, My People 69
Josefina 43
Jumanji 24
June 29, 1999 42
Just Another Day 31
Kate Shelley: Bound for Legend 59
Kisses From Rosa 37
Kofi and His Magic 5
Koko's Kitten 55
The Ledgerbook of Thomas Blue Eagle 54
The Legend of the Blue Bonnet: An Old Tale of Texas 31
Letters From Felix 16
Li'l Sis and Uncle Willie 13
Life Doesn't Frighten Me 45
Lightning 16
The Little House: Her Story 30
Long Live Music 39
The Lotus Seed 66

Macbeth for Kids 8
The Magic Fan 63
The Magic Schoolbus: At the Waterworks 12
Many Luscious Lollipops 66
Math Curse 60
Meanwhile 32
Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch 38, 116
A Midsummer Night's Dream 64
Miss Nelson is Back 5
Miss Rumphius 13
Mississippi Beau 21
More Than Anything Else 46
Motel of the Mysteries 18
Mouse Around 40
Mrs. Kate and Tush 57
My Grandma Lived in Gooligulch 64, 144
My House Has Stars 55
My Mama Had a Dancing Heart 78, 97 136, 146
My Mama Says There Aren't Any Zombies, Ghosts, Vampires, Creatures, Demons, Monsters, Fiends, Goblins or Things 83
My Ol' Man 39
My Painted House, My Friendly Chicken and Me 75
The Mysteries of Harris Burdick 41
Nappy Hair 79
Nurse Lugton's Curtain 25
The Old Dog 44
Old Henry 29
The Old Man and His Door 71, 134
The Old Woman Who Named Things 71, 94
On the Day You Were Born 14
The Other Way to Listen 7
Out of the Ark: Stories From the World's Great Religions 50
Panther Dream: A Story of the African Rain Forest 24
The Paper Bag Princess 55
Pictures in the Fire 68
Pink and Say 57
Possum Magic 65

Purr...Children's Book Illustrators Brag About Their Cats 58, 109
Ragtime Tumpie 23
Reach for the Moon 45
Rezoom 29,102
A River Dream 82
Rotten Ralph 34
Roxaboxen 20
Sadako 49
The Seasons Sewn 38, 107
The Seven Silly Eaters 35
Shrek! 73
The Sign of the Seahorse 75
Sitti's Secrets 21
Sleeping Ugly 62, 115
Slugs 78
The Snowman 30, 128
Solomon: The Rusty Nail 73
Sophie and Lou 19
Sports Pages 63
The Squiggle 23
The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales 60
The Storm 66, 106
Storm Boy 68
The Story of Ruby Bridges 12
A Street Called Home 22, 93
A Sweet, Sweet, Basket 12
Sweet Words So Brave 49
The Table Where Rich People Sit 76, 98
Tar Beach 57
The Teacher From the Black Lagoon 61
This Land is My Land 53
Time for Bed 77
To Hell With Dying 73, 91
Tomorrow's Alphabet 24
The Tortilla Factory 38
Tough Boris 33
Tree of Life: The World of the African Baobob 6

Tuesday 42
Twelfth Night for Kids 8
Twilight Comes Twice 32
The Twits 49
Two Bad Ants 41, 113, 125
Under the Sea from A to Z 31
Verdi 9, 139
A Visit to William Blake's Inn: Poems for the Innocent and Experienced Travelers 84
Voices of the Heart 74
The Wall 48
Way Home 51
We Are All in The Dumps With Jack and Guy 60
What Do Authors Do? 30
What You Know First 54, 92, 118
White Socks Only 49, 121
Whoever You Are 50, 90
Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge 14, 91, 135, 145
Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman 67
Wombat Divine 78
Work Song 81
Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story From China 54
Yo! Yes? 70, 158
Zoom 29, 102

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